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ABSTRACT

This packet consists of eight brochures which comprise a National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) program in parent education. Designed for parents of elementary school children, the brochures can be used at PTA meetings, for parent discussion groups or by individual parents interested in specific aspects of child rearing. Each brochure discusses current research or issues related to a specific topic and attempts to help parents to evaluate issues related to parenting and to encourage parents to pursue self-education on specific topics. Each brochure also includes a list of questions for reflection or discussion. The following brochures are included in the packet: (1) Parent Education: Where It's Been and Where It's Going; (2) Children's Rights and How Parents Can Protect Them; (3) Work and the American Family; (4) The Family in Today's Educational World; (5) Parents, Children, and Preventive Medicine; (6) Children and Values: A Guide for Parents and Teachers; (7) Developing the Mind of the Child; and (8) The ABC's of Children's Social Development. (BD)

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Today's Family in Focus

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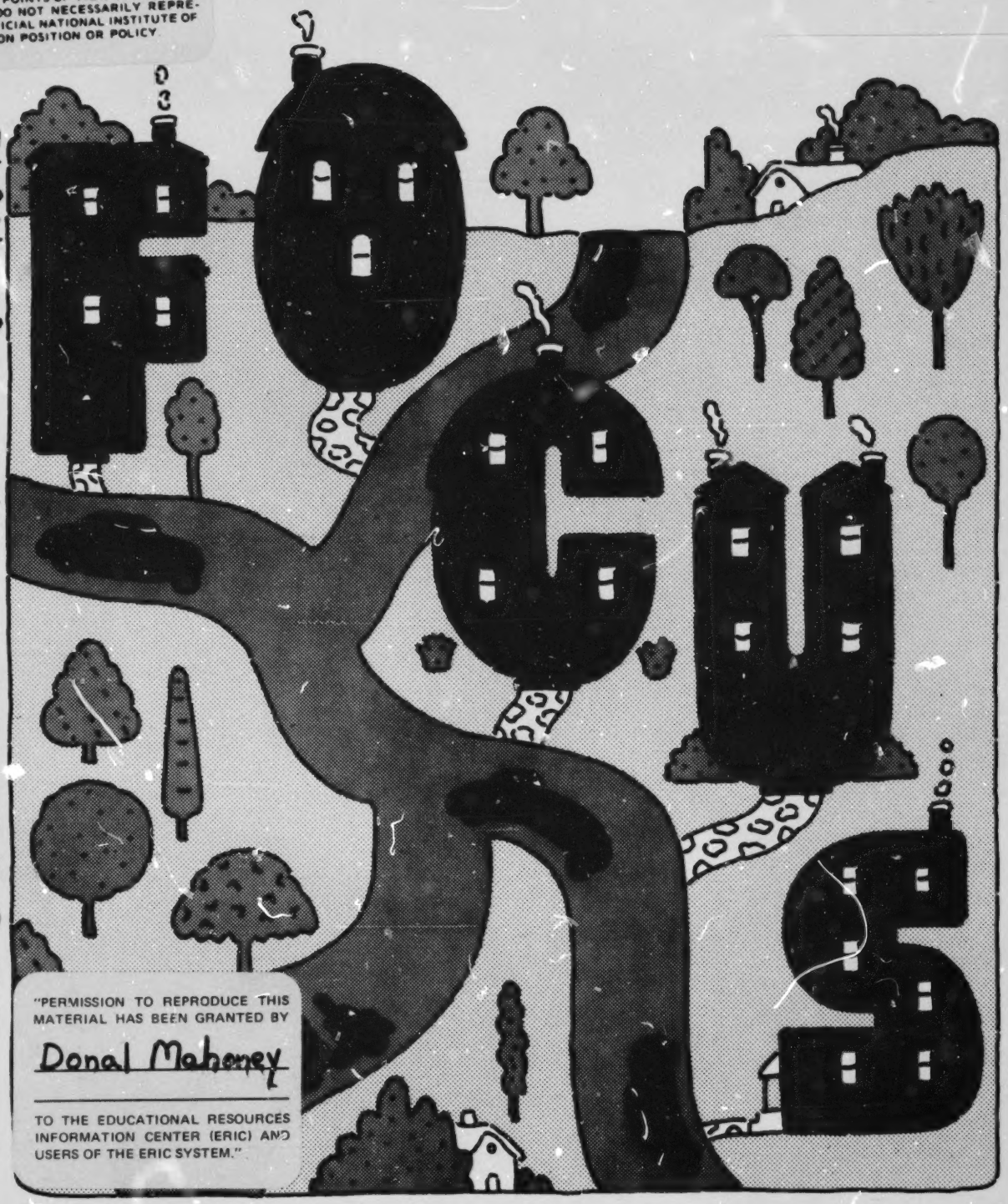

Contributors

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The Working Family Project is a group of young scholars at the Center for the Study of Public Policy. Funds for research by the Project have been provided by the National Institute of Education and the National Institute of Mental Health. Kevin Dougherty, Gail Howrigan, and Heather Weiss are doctoral students at Harvard University. Laura Lein, principal investigator, received her Ph.D. in social anthropology from Harvard University.

Parent Education: Where It's Been and Where It's Going

By Steven L. Schlossman, Ph.D.

TODAY'S FAMILY IN FOCUS is a series of eight concise brochures designed to introduce you to some current perspectives on family life and child care. The authors are young scholars associated with our nation's finest universities, each of whom specializes in one or another important area, from the dynamics of cognitive development to the politics of child advocacy.

Although the authors have worked independently, each of their brochures has the same two principal objectives. First, each attempts to bring together and simplify, without distortion, the most reliable information and the most lively issues in their respective fields. Second, each seeks to encourage and assist the average parent to develop a critical perspective and to pursue self-education in the area discussed. More specifically, the brochures aim to help you to help yourselves become more competent in the exercise of parenting skills, more aware of the social, economic, and political context of parenthood, and more astute in evaluating medical and social science trends that bear on child and family life.

None of the authors harbors any illusion of having provided the "last word" on his or her subject. Indeed, they are generally rather apologetic for having dared try to distill and summarize their knowledge and experiences in such brief space. Nonetheless, each of the authors is in full sympathy with the PTA's mission in sponsoring *Today's Family in Focus:* to break down the walls separating scholars who study child and family life and the average American parent.

The PTA anticipates that these eight brochures will be only the first of many dealing with different phases of parenting, and that the result will be a more frequent and meaningful dialogue between parents and university scholars in areas of mutual interest and concern.

For convenience and continuity, we suggest that you read the brochures in *Today's Family in Focus* in the following order:

The Parent in Modern Society

1 Parent Education: Where It's Been and Where It's Going (which follows in this brochure).
2 Children's Rights and How Parents Can Protect Them.
3 Work and the American Family.
4 The Family in Today's Educational World.

The Modern Parent in Action

5 Parents, Children, and Preventive Medicine.
6 Children and Values: A Guide for Parents and Teachers.
7 Developing the Mind of the Child.
8 The ABCs of Children's Social Development.

Enduring Issues in Parent Education

Today's Family in Focus springs from the PTA's long-standing interest in parent education. As a historian, I have been especially fascinated by the early development of the PTA and of parent education in general in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. My main goal in this brochure will be to isolate and discuss problems in parent education recognized as long as 80 years ago and still, for the most part, unresolved today. The study of history, I believe, can often provide guidance for planning the future. We most surely move forward when we have a clear sense of where we have already been.

You may not agree with my interpretation of the past or my suggestions about how to resolve persistent problems in parent education. That is perfectly all right; indeed it is in the spirit of *Today's Family in Focus,* which encourages parents to think critically about all "expert" information they receive. The important point, in this brochure as well as in all the others, is to get you actively engaged in thinking about, reading about, and debating the issues that impinge on your role as parents and family members. Whether you agree or disagree is less important than that you are informed, that you care, and that you express yourself openly and *publicly* about the issues which affect the future of the family in America.

The Genesis of Parent Education in America

From the founding of the American colonies, diverse private and governmental bodies have engaged in what can loosely be termed "parent education." This term I define broadly as any deliberate attempt to upgrade child-care practices in the home and/or to improve the overall quality of family life.

In seventeenth-century Massachusetts, for example, individuals called "tithingmen" were appointed to investigate the family situations of children whose parents were suspected of providing inadequately for their religious and secular education. If the parents were found guilty of neglect, their children could be taken away and placed in other families where they would receive proper instruction.

In the early and mid-nineteenth century—when church and state were no longer as closely allied as in the colonial period—voluntary organizations began to take over the responsibility of overseeing the moral education and general welfare of children. A group such as the New York Children's Aid Society, begun by the evangelical minister Charles Loring Brace, developed a

multifaceted approach that relied on home visitation, industrial schools, temporary lodging houses for child laborers, and, in extreme cases, the "placing out" of city youth in rural families for upbringing.

Other voluntary organizations, such as the boys' clubs and YMCAs, also took upon themselves the dual responsibility of providing direct assistance and guidance to parents for more effective child rearing at home, and alternative safe environments in which children could work and play when not at home. These volunteer activities, which spread throughout America in the latter half of the nineteenth century, provided precedents for the development of governmental programs to assist and supplement parents in their child-care responsibilities (often under the threat of removing the child from the home if the parents failed to cooperate).

By the turn of the twentieth century, there was little strictly "new" about the idea of parent education. Nonetheless, the creation of two new voluntary organizations in 1888 and 1897—respectively, the Society for the Study of Child Nature (which became the Child Study Association of America, or CSAA), and the National Congress of Mothers (which became the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, or PTA)—did signify a major advance in parent education programs, and created models for the formation of parent organizations throughout the world.

The CSAA is generally regarded as the first organization in America devoted exclusively to parent education. Heavily dependent for membership on the New York Ethical Culture Society, the CSAA remained very small until the 1910s, when it came under the leadership of Sidonie Gruenberg, a young mother and Ph.D. in child psychology with a passionate interest in all aspects of child rearing. Under Gruenberg's inspired direction—aided considerably by her pediatrician husband, Benjamin—the CSAA became very prominent in the 1920s and 1930s. Gruenberg taught the first university course ever offered in parent education, at Teachers College, Columbia University, in 1925; edited the CSAA's monthly periodical, *Child Study*, perhaps the most sophisticated popular parents' magazine ever published; and provided inspiration for numerous conferences on parent education, the first of which resulted in the publication of *Concerning Parents* (1926), still a classic in the field. Furthermore, the CSAA sponsored the only effort ever made to coordinate all parent education activities in this country, the National Council of Parent Education, which lasted from 1925 to 1938.

Without detracting from the quality of work performed by the CSAA, it must be admitted that it never became a truly popular organization. At the peak of its reputation the membership barely exceeded six thousand. Though it spearheaded the development of new methods of parent education—especially the use of mass media in the 1930s—the CSAA remained a tightly knit and exclusive group, dominated by highly educated and well-to-do women from the east coast.

The PTA was, from the first, a more popular and representative organization of parents than the CSAA. Although it too, at least at the beginning, was dominated by affluent women, it drew its membership from the entire country. Like most popular social movements, the PTA was a product of one person's brainstorm coinciding with the intellectual climate of the times.

The PTA idea originated with Alice Birney, mother of three children and wife of a prominent Washington lawyer. Having been widowed herself at the young age of 19 while expecting her first child, she had given much thought to the problems of raising children, even as she pursued a career for herself in business (before meeting her second husband). For many years Birney's ideas about how to help young parents rear children were not formal or systematic, but in 1896, as she attended a series of adult education seminars in Chautauqua, New York, her thoughts coalesced and the idea for the PTA was born. Her own enthusiasm, combined with the financial backing of Phoebe Hearst (wife of Senator George Hearst from California), led to the convocation of the first PTA convention in Washington on February 17, 1897.

Given the late notice and minimal publicity for the convention, Alice Birney and Phoebe Hearst would have been satisfied if just a few dozen women had attended so they could get things rolling. To their amazement more than two thousand participants from numerous states descended upon Washington, throwing the convention into havoc but proving, clearly, that many hitherto isolated women felt exactly as they did and needed only encouragement and a permanent forum to come forward.

The growth of the PTA was slow but steady. In 1900 seven states had formed PTA branches; by 1920 the number had grown to 36. In 1912, the first date for which reliable information is available, the total number of members was 31,672. By 1920 the membership had grown to 190,181, and the years of truly rapid growth were still ahead. By 1927 the total membership exceeded one million, making the PTA by far the leading parents' organization in America.

It is difficult to summarize, without oversimplifying, the wide range of activities that went on under PTA sponsorship in the first decades of its existence. The fertile imagination of Alice Birney needs no further comment; she was obviously a creative and dynamic leader who established the PTA's major lines of development for the ensuing decades. Equally influential, though, was Hannah Schoff, who ascended to the presidency in 1902 after Birney's declining health forced her to retire. For 18 years Hannah Schoff (who had originated and been president of the Pennsylvania branch of the PTA) exercised bold leadership, joining her considerable political talents to a lively intellect, a deep love for children, and a passion for social justice. Her many writings brought her to the attention of the most famous social reformers and political statesmen of her time. *The Wayward Child*, which she published in 1915, was a stirring appeal for increased attention by government to the needs of the poor. Like Jane Addams of Hull House, she built upon the example of others to sensitize the nation's conscience to the importance of preserving and upbuilding home and family life.

Parent Education and the Sciences of Child Development

Unlike the voluntary organizations that had existed earlier, both the CSAA and the PTA pioneered in the attempt to popularize exciting new discoveries in the medical and behavioral sciences of the late nineteenth century. Both were committed to the idea that university research should be made available to parents as quickly as possible. Since very few parents at this time had finished high school (much less gone to college or done graduate study), this was a remarkably ambitious task, especially for the PTA. In retrospect it seems fortunate that the Founders did not fully comprehend the difficulties—otherwise they might have quit before they began!

The principal forum for making scientific research available to parents was the local study group. PTA headquarters sought to maintain a high educational tone in the study groups by assigning a common "curriculum" for each meeting. In every issue of the monthly *National Congress of Mothers Magazine*, several scholarly and semischolarly articles were chosen for special attention, and appropriate methods and time limits for discussing them were given. The ultimate aim was to standardize the local PTAs throughout the nation, as well as to guarantee that anecdotal presentations did not

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dominate the discussions.

Although it is difficult to determine exactly what went on in the first study groups, it seems clear that they upheld fairly high intellectual standards. As early as the 1920s, however, it was becoming apparent that the study groups were turning into social and recreational more than educational occasions. Gossip began to usurp the attention previously paid to scientific literature or legislation promoting the welfare of children. This was the unfortunate conclusion reached by Cornell University professor Julian Butterworth, a good friend of the PTA, in his book *The Parent-Teacher Association and Its Work* (1928). Butterworth's research left little doubt that the study groups were no longer what they used to be.

Clearly the PTA today believes that the study groups are a good deal more conscientious than they were in the 1920s, and that they remain a potentially potent means of parent education. *Today's Family in Focus* is intended to reinvigorate the study groups by turning their attention, once again, to scientific research on child development and social, political, and economic factors that affect home and family life. The need in this area is readily apparent, perhaps even more so than when the PTA began.

The medical and behavioral sciences have matured considerably since the early twentieth century, and permeate our daily lives. Who has not heard of Dr. Benjamin Spock or Dr. Joyce Brothers? Ironically, though, the very availability of literally hundreds of books and articles on parenting makes the PTA's role today that much more important. Who but specialists can keep up with all of it? Who can raise a family and read all there is to read? By encouraging leading scholars to communicate their ideas in compact form, the PTA hopes to ease the burdens of modern parenthood and assure that even full-time parents do not lose touch with some of the most exciting and relevant intellectual discoveries of their time.

Men Are Parents Too!

The original name of the PTA clearly indicated who its principal membership was: the National Congress of *Mothers*. Together with the vast majority of people of their generation, Alice Birney, Hannah Schoff, and Phoebe Hearst felt that a woman's principal moral obligation was to full-time motherhood, and that women therefore formed the natural constituency for organized parent education. At the same time, however, some of the Founders expressed concern that fathers were being left out of the new organization, to the detriment not only of family life but of the visibility and political clout of the PTA in general. In planning for the 1899 convention, for example, Birney announced her intention "to arouse in the fathers of our country the interest that has already been aroused in the mothers."

Unfortunately, though, the 1899 convention, as well as most of the others before and after, generally ignored the father's role in rearing children. Consider, for example, the titles of the majority of papers delivered at the initial PTA convention in 1897: "Mother and Child of the Primitive World," "Mothers of the Submerged World," "What the Kindergarten Means to Mothers," "Mothers and Schools," "Mother's Relation to the Sound Physical Development of Her Child," "The Moral Responsibility of Women in Heredity," "The Mother's Greatest Needs," "Reading Courses for Mothers," "National Training School for Women," and "How Shall the Nation Secure Educated Mothers?" Fascinating subjects to be sure, but can anyone doubt that fathers felt left out?

As all of you surely recognize, this problem is far from being resolved today. The PTA has yet to shed its public image as a women's organization, and men still play only a minimal role in its leadership. In my view, the importance of attracting men to the PTA remains as important as ever. Moreover, for a number of reasons the possibility of realizing this goal may be greater today than in the past.

First of all, sex roles today for both men and women are defined much less rigidly than when the PTA first came into existence. In our society women still provide the primary child care, and men still provide the primary financial support, but we no longer assume that this arrangement is unalterable. As women have been drawn increasingly into the job market, so men may take more responsibility for child care. With the convergence of roles and expectations for men and women, it should be possible to get larger numbers of men actively involved in PTA work.

Second, since the beginnings of the PTA the leisure time available to men who are employed full time has increased considerably. Together with rising national income, the declining work week provides the economic foundation for increased participation by men in educational activities that enhance their child-rearing abilities. Surely some of the time presently spent on spectatorship, particularly watching sports events or rerun movies, could more profitably be devoted to self-instruction and sharing child-care responsibilities.

And, finally, increasing numbers of families today are run either alone or primarily by fathers. The male single-parent family may not fit our image of what the ideal family arrangement should be, but the PTA dare not neglect single fathers (any more than single mothers) if it expects to remain responsive to changing social patterns and pressing personal needs. For these various reasons, then, now seems a particularly opportune time to get men more involved in the entire gamut of PTA activities.

Diversity: Reaching Out and Remaining Independent

Rightly or wrongly, the PTA is popularly regarded today not only as a predominantly female organization but also as a predominantly middle-class one. Despite the fact that so many of the PTA's concerns reflect its abiding interest in the special problems of poor families, and despite the PTA's long-term commitment to protecting the rights of all children, regardless of racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic background, the middle-class image persists.

If only to provide solace, this is the popular image the PTA has always labored under. Even though it was a much more representative organization than the CSAA, the PTA Founders were in fact largely middle- and upper-class "ladies" with the leisure and social conscience to devote to urgent causes. Equally important, though—and here the early history of the PTA diverges sharply from that of the CSAA—the Founders also recognized the importance of shedding their "society" image by working together with poor mothers in urban slums.

PTA members were encouraged to go as individuals and as groups to visit their poorer neighbors, to provide them with necessary information from the medical and behavioral sciences and also to experience for themselves "how the other half lived." Their goal was to supplement the services of visiting nurses, visiting teachers, visiting homemakers, probation officers, and social settlements. Drawing upon prior work with church-sponsored charities, local PTAs delegated several of their members to serve as moral and scientific missionaries to less fortunate women with whom they aspired to identify in spirit, if not in experience or current circumstances.

Unfortunately, the spirit of voluntary social service that imbued the early PTA has faded dramatically over the past several decades, in part for understandable reasons. The vast expansion of public social services, in particular, has done much to alleviate the dire poverty that was all too common around the turn of the century. At the same time, however, the growth of public social

services has also dampened the sense of social obligation and fellowship that motivated the PTA Founders. Together with the movement of growing numbers of families into the suburbs, this has led to decreasing social contacts between people of different socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, and to increasing hostility, suspicion, and irrational fears between groups of people who barely know each other.

What better way is there for the PTA to build upon its own history than to revitalize the spirit of personal social service among its members, to encourage those in more affluent neighborhoods to take the initiative in establishing more frequent contacts and organizational ties with parents in poorer neighborhoods? To be sure, this will not be an easy task. Generations of mistrust, fear, and hatred die hard. But the PTA has always stood for two principles that bear on this issue: first, that parents, simply because they are parents, share a common bond and obligation to provide children the best care possible within their means; and, second, that parents have much to teach each other. The cry of "save the children" – which served as a rallying point for the founding of the United States Children's Bureau in 1912 – can serve equally well today to bring together parents of different backgrounds and beliefs so they might educate one another in tolerance and join in common cause for the benefit of all children.

There are other neglected segments of the population to whom the PTA might reach out more effectively in the future. Consider, for example, the young married couples who are increasingly delaying the birth of their first children, or the parents of preschool youngsters. Why, we might ask, does the PTA not have as members more young married couples without children or with very young children?

The answer is, at least in part, historical. Alice Birney did encourage women of all ages to join the PTA, whether they had children or not, or whatever the ages of their children. While her successor, Hannah Schoff, also wanted to get all women involved in PTA activities, she increasingly emphasized the home-school link as central to the PTA's mission. Under her direction the name of the organization was changed in 1908 to the National Congress of Mothers *and* Parent-Teacher Associations.

Now there is no denying the wisdom of Hannah Schoff in forging a strong tie between the home and the school. Not only have some of the PTA's greatest contributions been in this area, but, from a practical standpoint, there was probably no more effective way to increase membership quickly than by stressing the immediate impact parents could have on their children's schools. Nonetheless, I would suggest, the close linkage in the public mind between the PTA and the schools did have one negative result. It led to a drop-off in the numbers of women who remained connected with the PTA after their children left school, and it discouraged recently married women with young children or without children from joining the PTA. Many potential PTA members may well have been lost over the years because insufficient attention was paid to young married couples at precisely the time when they most needed a common organization to share experiences and gain advice.

In addition to diversifying membership, one of the most important phases of parent education work is maintaining intellectual independence. To broaden their appeal, parent educators must not become identified with a particular theoretical approach to parenting. Otherwise they run the danger of giving allegiance to an intellectual viewpoint no longer considered valid.

The PTA has stayed clearer of this danger than the CSAA, which so enthusiastically endorsed "permissive" Freudian child-rearing theory that it never attracted many concerned parents who did not agree with Freud or who became disenchanted with his ideas.

The PTA has never advocated a single, "correct" approach to parenting. Rather, its approach has been eclectic: at different points in its history the PTA has endorsed a variety of methods. Even the PTA, though, has felt the danger of too close identification with a particular body of psychological thought. In the years before World War I, the PTA's patron intellectual saint was G. Stanley Hall, president of Clark University and one of the foremost psychologists of his time (known especially for his pioneering studies of children's play activities). Hall was also a close personal friend of Alice Birney, and wrote an admiring preface to Birney's charming little book, *Childhood* (1904). Though Hall's support helped the PTA in the early years, it hurt the organization later. When most of Hall's psychological theories fell into extreme disfavor in the 1920s, the PTA's connection with him became embarrassing and its reputation suffered as a result.

Clearly, then, a very delicate balance must be maintained in the matter of intellectual independence. Of necessity, sponsors of parent education programs must adapt for general use the best medical and psychological knowledge available at any particular moment. At the same time, however, they need to remain independent and flexible enough to consider other points of view, and to withdraw allegiance to specific theories when they no longer seem valid or usable. To be both popular and discriminating: this is a difficult challenge for parent educators, but one that the PTA must meet if it is to remain abreast of its times and keep parents responsibly informed.

Parent Education and the Politics of Child Advocacy

Anyone who has followed the National PTA's involvement in and support of the Child and Family Services Act is fully aware of the PTA's commitment to political education and political action on behalf of children. Several registered lobbyists, plus countless political activists on the local level, bear witness to the PTA s support of legislation necessary to upgrade family life and child development. As a recent PTA brochure (*Why PTA – Instead of PTO*) points out, parents sometimes forget that "their children will grow up and live with *all* children," and, therefore, that political lobbying is essential "for a better environment in which *all* children can grow and learn." The issue remains, though, how actively and how openly the PTA should get involved in political advocacy on behalf of children and parents. Here again historical perspective can be useful in charting the future.

In its early days the PTA was an unabashedly political organization. Political advocacy was one of the things distinguishing the PTA most sharply from the CSAA, which delimited its concerns mainly to providing proper reading and discussion materials for its study groups. Emerging at the same time as the great social movement in American life known to historians as "Progressivism," the PTA saw itself as the chief, indeed the sole political representative of children in the halls of city governments, state legislatures, and Congress (after 1912, it shared this role with the Children's Bureau). The location of the National PTA headquarters in Washington at that time obviously facilitated political involvement, as did the prominent political contacts of the Founders. Alice Birney and Hannah Schoff worked closely with some of the most respected political statesmen and social reformers of their time, including President Theodore Roosevelt and the world-famous judge of the Denver Juvenile Court, Benjamin Barr Lindsey. Toward the end of his presidency Roosevelt wrote to Schoff telling her that his relationship with the PTA was one of the finest experiences of his time in office.

On the local level, especially through the study groups, the PTA stressed the education of mothers in social and political affairs that influenced the quality of home life. The study groups had as a primary goal making

women conscious of, and willing to take action to remedy, distressing examples of social injustice. Political action and political education were integral to the PTA's notion of parent education.

Not surprisingly, many of the political activities undertaken by the PTA at the beginning of the century would be considered of dubious value today: for instance, its unrelenting campaigns against the Mormons for allegedly condoning bigamy, against the musical "evil" of jazz, and for more modest dress among youth. But the PTA was also instrumental in building popular support and lobbying for such important measures as child labor laws, housing codes, pure food and drug acts, kindergartens, vocational training programs, juvenile courts and probation, playgrounds, and mothers' pensions (an early form of Aid for Dependent Children designed to allow poor, single mothers to remain at home with their children instead of being forced to work). Local PTAs were expected to join together to lobby for desired legislation at the state level, as was the case, for example, in Idaho in 1913 when the Idaho Congress of Mothers drafted the mothers' pension bill which became law that year. To the Founders of the PTA, any definition of parent education that did not include political action would have been considered merely self-serving. To them the PTA was a lever for changing society by organizing mothers of the nation in common cause.

Political lobbying on behalf of children and parents thus builds on one of the firmest historical traditions of the PTA. Today, as in the past, one of the primary goals of the PTA must be to tap the latent energies of millions of adults who do not now feel that any established voluntary organization, governmental body, or political party adequately represents their parental concerns. We would all probably agree that the rights of children and parents ought to go beyond politics. But in the real world, these rights can be guaranteed only by concerted political representation—a fact of life that the Founders of the PTA recognized and one which we dare not forget. Children do not vote but their parents do.

These, then, are some of the enduring issues in parent education, with my interpretations of how knowledge of the past can illuminate the choices we need to make for the future. Of course, many new issues will confront the PTA in upcoming years for which knowledge of the past will provide little guidance. What should be done to curtail TV violence is, of course, a most relevant case in point, but other equally important issues will similarly call for creative responses. For example, what should be the role of government in developing parent education programs in the future? Should the use of publicly sponsored day-care centers be linked to participation in parent education programs? Should public schools require children to take courses to develop parenting skills? What are the potential benefits and the potential liabilities of each program? Might children, for instance, so resent their compulsory training in school that they would be unreceptive to parent education when they actually got married and had children? Issues like these cry out for intelligent discussion now.

The PTA, fortunately, has never sought uniformity of thought among its membership, although it has tried to provide advice, scholarship, and programmatic guidelines. The PTA seeks to raise the level of public awareness and involvement in all matters pertaining to child development and family life, not to offer final answers to complex social, economic, and political questions. It is in that spirit of free and compassionate inquiry that I have briefly reviewed enduring issues in parent education, and in which this series was conceived and written.

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1 In this brochure, the author asserts that knowledge of the history of parent education can help us plan its future. Do you agree or disagree?

2 What does "parent education" mean to you? What different approaches to parent education have you been exposed to? Did your own parents ever attend parent education classes or read parent education materials?

3 The early PTA study groups were designed, in large measure, to "translate" and transmit to parents the most important discoveries in the sciences of child development. Have any of the study groups you have attended ever attempted the same goal? Is this still a feasible objective?

4 Do men play as important a role as women in your PTA? Should they, and can they?

5 In this brochure, the author speaks of "the spirit of voluntary social service which imbued the early PTA." How might your PTA attempt to recapture that spirit? Does your PTA reflect a sufficient diversity of individuals and viewpoints necessary to ensure continuing vitality?

6 Did it surprise you to learn that the early PTA was so political an organization? Do you think your local PTA pays too little or too much attention to political matters that affect children? Should the National PTA take on a more active role in Washington on behalf of political legislation for the benefit of children?

Additional Readings

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Child Study Association of America. *Concerning Parents.* New York: New Republic, 1926.
A classic collection of papers delivered at the most important parent education conference of the 1920s.

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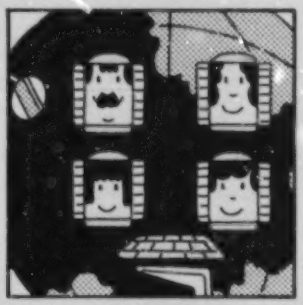
The Family in Today's Educational World



By Hope Jensen Leichter, Ph.D.

The family is almost invariably the first educator of the child, and some of the individual's most basic education takes place within the family. Almost all children learn language – their most important social and intellectual tool – before they go to school.

Recently, educators have come to recognize the important role the family plays in the education of the child. A number of studies have considered how education takes place in the family and the relation between the ways in which parents educate their children and the success children have in school.

Although the research is not conclusive enough to point to particular things parents can do to ensure that their children will succeed in school, there is general agreement that the family plays a major role in the child's education, even beyond its contribution to the child's success in school.

Education within the family is important, not only in the early years but throughout the individual's life. And this education takes place through many different relationships. Parents are usually the first educators of the child, but they are not the only educators, even within the family. Siblings, brothers and sisters, are important in educating each other, as anyone with more than one child can easily observe. Children talk to each other, show each other how to do things, correct each other, tell each other about school.

In addition, parents are educated by their children. In some instances children teach their parents directly, as, for example, in the classic case of immigrant parents who are taught the language and customs of the new country by their children and through reliving educational experiences indirectly through their children.

Parents also educate each other. Any marriage involves bringing together two persons of somewhat different backgrounds – no matter how similar they may be – with different ideas and experiences and different activities in the outside world. As a result, husbands and wives become teachers of each other.

And beyond this is the important and sometimes overlooked role of grandparents as educators. Anthropological studies indicate that grandparents play very different roles in different societies, depending on how rapidly the society is changing. But even in a society such as ours, in which immigration and rapid social changes have been significant, grandparents can and do play a vital educational role, making possible a connection with experiences in other times and places.

With the growing recognition in many quarters of the importance of the family as educator, the family as much as any other institution (except perhaps the school) has become the subject of criticism and attack for the way in which it educates or fails to educate its children. Experience in the family is a very personal and emotional part of everyone's life. It is hard to be neutral and objective in judging the family, either one's own or someone else's.

Even the presumably objective scientific literature on the subject is filled with unwitting judgments about what is proper and improper in family life. And as one looks beyond the scientific literature, the family is being criticized from one viewpoint after another, and often in highly inconsistent ways.

On the one hand, professional mothers who work are criticized for damaging their children's psychological development. On the other hand, working-class mothers who accept welfare funds to remain at home with their children are criticized for not going to work.

Furthermore, children's school failure is blamed on poor language interaction with the mother. Declines in test scores are blamed on an absence of discipline in the home. Lack of interest in school is blamed on insufficient support from parents.

In the scholarly literature that discusses these matters, the emphasis is often on difficulties and deficits. The family is examined to account for the failure rather than the success of children in school. In the heated controversies over whether the school or the family is to blame for particular educational shortcomings, the family has come in for a great deal of criticism. This criticism is useful in pointing to the importance of the family, but it often oversimplifies and fails to take into account the way in which the family is connected with other educative institutions.

The Family and Other Institutions That Educate

Contemporary educational theory stresses that "configurations of education" exist in all societies; that many institutions educate – families, schools, churches and synagogues, museums, national parks, community centers, libraries, and the media; and that the various institutions that educate relate to each other in different ways at different times.

The importance of these varied sources of education is sometimes not recognized. Many individuals still equate the term "education" with "schooling." Both teachers and parents sometimes fail to recognize the enormous impact of education through other institutions besides the school.

One recent definition helps to make clear

the variety of situations in which education can take place. Lawrence A. Cremin, president of Teachers College, Columbia University, has defined education as "the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, and sensibilities."

If one thinks about the resources in one's own community with this definition in mind, it becomes clear that an extremely wide range of possibilities exists. Some families could easily compile a surprisingly long list of formal lessons that its various members are engaged in – and many of these lessons involve substantial expenditures of time, energy, and money. In addition, many other family activities not necessarily thought of as educational – for example, family travel – have enormous educative potential.

And possible sources of education are still greater if one uses an even broader definition of education – to include not only formal instruction and deliberate efforts to educate oneself and others but also those moment-to-moment experiences, particularly in the family, that are at the margins of awareness.

The brief, small-scale events of daily life, those that are likely to be repeated again and again, can have profound educational significance. The routines of activity in the family, the phone conversations with relatives, the visits to the local stores where prices and products are discussed – these and innumerable other day-to-day events all take on important educational meaning.

The family is thus central, not only because a great deal of education takes place within the home, but also because the family "mediates" the education of other institutions. The family plays a vital part in filtering, screening, appraising, criticizing, selecting, planning, and shaping the educational experiences that its members have elsewhere.

While some of the research studies and much of the public criticism of the family today assume that the family exists apart from society, one need only to examine one's own life to realize that in most families the daily round of activity of almost all members includes considerable time outside as well as inside the home. Moreover, many things that take place outside the home – at work for husbands and increasingly for wives as well, and in school for children – have a profound influence within the home. In addition, when one considers the role of television, it is clear that the outside world is very much a part of the home environment.

On the one hand, this means that the family alone cannot legitimately be held responsible for everything that takes place in a child's or in an adult's education. On the other hand, it places a special responsibility on the family: the responsibility for educational choice. The many sources of education create numerous options for the individual and the family, with the result that the most critical educational question for the family today is how to select from among many possibilities.

It would be useful to examine the processes by which the family mediates educational experiences in a variety of institutions. One might ask, for example, in what way the family is linked with churches or synagogues, how the family uses libraries and museums, how the family searches for and uses educational resources such as encyclopedias. The list of institutions with which families may have educational linkages could go on and on, and the list would differ from one family to another.

Two institutions, however, are of overwhelming importance today for almost all families – namely, schools and television. For this reason, an examination of the family's relation to schools and television is important in its own right, and can also serve as a model for thinking about the way in which the family mediates education in other institutions.

The Family and the School

However extensive the range of institutions that educate, the school remains the most important center of formal instruction. The foremost concern of most parents in thinking about the education of their children has to do with the character and quality of their children's schooling.

A good deal of recent concern – and with it much heat and controversy – has centered on the role that parents can and should play in relation to the school. While the issues are not new, contemporary educators have been reconsidering ways in which parents can become involved in schools, and schools can become more sensitive to the rights of parents to make decisions about their children's education.

Numerous programs have been set up to increase the direct participation of parents in the schools – for example, as teacher aides, volunteers, and paraprofessionals. In addition, new professionals have emerged, such as school-community coordinators, with responsibility for ensuring that the schools remain sensitive to parental desires and concerns. Discussions in this area have included heated political debates over such questions as the "accountability" of educators to parents and the responsiveness of large-scale bureaucracies to the needs of particular communities.

In the dialogue, the rights of parents to have their own particular beliefs and cultural backgrounds reflected within the school have been a central concern. The issue is often raised as to whether certain religious beliefs, cultural traditions, or special languages should be taught.

Proposals for political and financial reform have also been made. The "voucher" system – whereby parents are given an educational allowance they can use in payment for education in a school of their choice – is one such proposal.

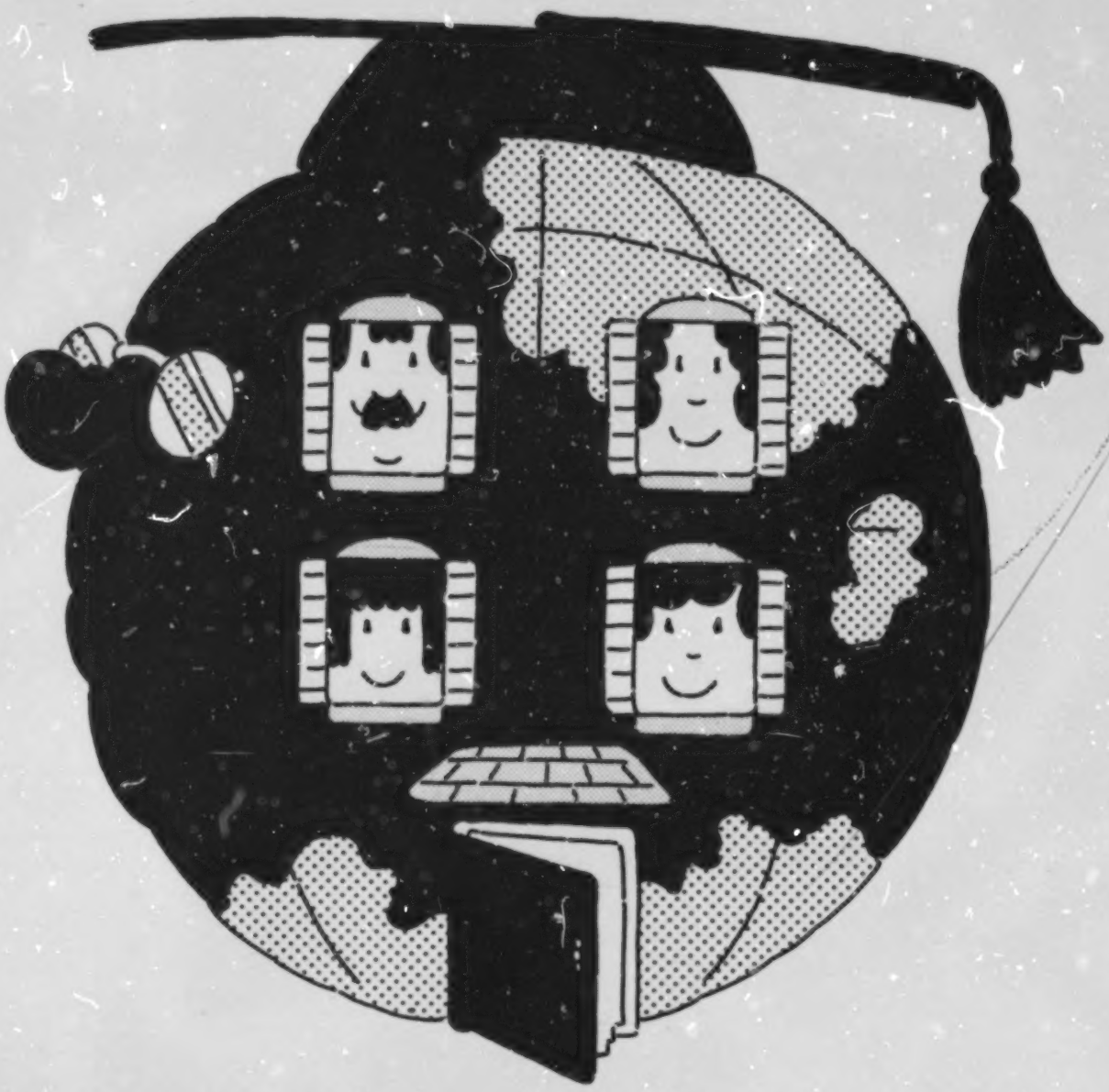
Many of these innovations, however, have created a conflict between the rights of individual parents to make particular educational decisions about their children, and the right of the community to govern the public schools through representative boards of education.

Some of the most heated debates have taken place in the area of early childhood (or preschool) education and day-care programs. Here, a variety of emotionally laden issues have come together – women's roles in the larger society and whether mothers of young children should leave the home for outside employment; the ability of families with limited educational and economic resources to offer the best educational start to their children; the obligation of society to provide education for its citizens and the issue of when that education should start; and the right of parents to make decisions about the education of their children.

While parents and other community members do have an important influence on the character of education in their schools, each parent must make educational choices apart from these broader debates. Although parents sometimes have exercised (and legally won) the right to remove their children from schools and educate them at home, a more realistic question for most parents concerns how to influence the education of their own child within a given set of constraints – the constraints of a particular school system or program.

Each school system, no matter how good, is to some degree an imperfect replica of the parents' wishes and beliefs, if for no other reason than because no school can accurately reflect the values of all the families that come to it. Religious beliefs, cultural backgrounds, views of child development, preferences with respect to discipline, all are potential points of difference among parents and between parents and the school. For parents seeking to appraise and supplement the child's schooling, the enormous diversity of educational opportunities in today's world becomes an important potential.

In some ways, however, the most difficult responsibility for the parent, the realm where the parent most dramatically mediates in



relation to the school, is in the evaluation of the child's school performance. Unfortunately the educational literature is filled with sagas about parents who are uninterested in their children's educational achievements, but this is a grossly inaccurate picture. Most parents care deeply about their children and about their children's educational attainment.

Although it is sometimes overlooked in the educational literature, the school is inevitably a gatekeeper for society's opportunities. Whatever the procedures used to appraise children – standardized tests, written evaluations, or grades – the teacher and the school inevitably look at children comparatively and evaluate them in terms of some system of ranking. The parent, on the other hand, invariably wishes his or her child to have the best of opportunities, however these opportunities are conceived.

One of the most emotionally difficult issues for the parent is how to appraise the school's appraisal of the child. From the earliest days of preschool or kindergarten, children are evaluated and labeled in one way or another: "slow learner," "gifted," "underachiever," "behavior problem," "hyperactive."

Moreover, schools keep cumulative records of these evaluations so that a child's school record becomes part of his or her biography. With each report from the school, the parent faces the question of how to appraise the appraisal.

This is not to suggest that the school's evaluations are necessarily faulty; but as educators know very well, particularly those who have reviewed standardized tests, no system of testing or evaluating can ever give a totally accurate description, either of the range of the individual's abilities and achievements at a given point in time, or of the individual's future possibilities.

Until recently, the educational records of children were often unavailable to parents. The right of parents to have access to children's school records and test results (including standardized tests of "intelligence") has long been a subject of considerable controversy. Today, however, the schools' stand is increasingly to accept the right of the parent to examine the evaluations and records that are kept of the child's performance.

Indeed, the so-called Buckley Amendment in federal law guarantees this right under certain circumstances. But beyond this, whatever the practices in a particular school may be, the parent necessarily encounters and deals with the evaluations of his or her child, whether these are based on teachers' observations, peer reports, or standardized tests.

Here, parents face the dilemma they face with all professionals. There is indeed a body of professional knowledge in education, and most parents would not wish to have their children taught by teachers who are not experts in their fields.

Similarly, there is a body of professional knowledge in medicine, and one presumably selects a physician on the basis of his or her expertise.

Yet, in either case, the ultimate decision about accepting or questioning an appraisal, whether in the educational or the medical realm, rests with the parent.

The dilemma is indeed a difficult one: on the one hand, the parent wishes to have confidence in professional judgments; on the other hand, the ultimate responsibility for accepting appraisal rests with the parent.

It is particularly important for parents to be aware of what educators have called the self-fulfilling prophecy – that is, the possibility that the expectation a child will succeed or fail contributes to the expected outcome.

Failure may occur in part because failure is expected; success may occur in part because success is expected.

The parent faces the often painful dilemma of assessing judgments by professionals and, where appropriate, discounting and counterbalancing them.

Here again, the variety of educational opportunities available in the community can be important in offering other arenas for evaluation that can assist the parent and the child in maintaining some sense of balance.

What is often even more difficult for the parent is how to appraise and supplement the education that takes place within the school without unwittingly undermining it. How does the parent differ with the teacher's interpretation of a particular piece of literature or a particular point in history without undermining the teacher?

There is no simple answer, but it is of some help to recognize that the dilemma is common. To repeat: the school cannot – and probably should not – be an exact replica of the values and beliefs of all the families it serves. Some tension is inevitable.

It is important for parents to be aware of the profound impact of their day-to-day decisions, evaluations, and discussions in the home. Sometimes parents may find it difficult to extract details of daily events in school from their children. But the continuity of discussions in the home and the very fact that the home is a place to which family members return each day require that parents become more aware of their important role in mediating the education that takes place in the school.

Television in the Family

Perhaps the most important area in which the family has the possibility of, as well as the responsibility for, making educational choices for children is television – an outside force within the home. The development of television has taken place with enormous rapidity. In 1950, fewer than 10 percent of American homes had television; in 1976, 99 percent of homes had television, with at least one family member looking at television on the average of 6 hours out of every 24.

The astounding amount of time spent watching television – and this includes the time of very young children in their formative years – has been a matter of great concern to educators and citizens. Some children spend more time watching television than they spend in school. In light of such information, various efforts at "educational programming" have been undertaken. But so-called educational programs are only part of the offering of most networks, and it is clear that the entire repertoire of television educates in one way or another.

For this reason a good deal of attention has been given to the effects of television, particularly of the violence that is portrayed.

In a report issued in 1971, a scientific advisory committee appointed by the Surgeon General of the United States Public Health Service reviewed the research on the effects of television violence. The evidence then available was neither wholly consistent nor conclusive in indicating a simple and direct connection between the viewing of violence and aggressive behavior. But it did suggest, from studies in both natural and experimental settings, that under some conditions for some children the viewing of violence on television may be followed by increases in aggressive behavior.

Quite apart from the scientific evidence that is available, however, there is reason for deep concern about the quality of television programming, and a number of important efforts to upgrade that programming have been undertaken. Unquestionably there is room for vast improvement.

Although parents may choose to join forces with those who are pressing for the improvement of television programming, they must continue to make their own choices within the constraints of existing programming.

In addition, it is important to recognize the profound impact the family can have through the process of mediation. Families can and do interpret, criticize, reinforce, complement, and counteract television.

One of the projects at the Center for the Study of the Family as Educator at Teachers College, Columbia University, is concerned with how the family mediates television.

Some recent critics have suggested that the impact of television does not lie merely

in the programming but rather in the fact that television viewing is essentially passive. Other critics have remarked upon the extent to which children are left alone with television—the frequency with which it is used as a baby-sitter and becomes a substitute for parent-child relations. Still other critics have been concerned with the ways in which parents can be helped to control the amount and quality of television viewing in the homes.

It seems clear that simple warnings about the possible harmful effects of some television viewing upon the educational development of children are insufficient to persuade parents to change the ways in which they manage television in the home. Moreover, even in those instances in which parents decide to do without television entirely, this decision is difficult to accomplish and sustain.

The research at the Center is concerned with gaining a better understanding of how television viewing fits into other patterns of family activity, into the daily round of family life, and, beyond that, how it becomes a part of the family's habits of living. The initial data indicate great variation in these patterns, depending in part on the number and placement of television sets and on the nature of family activities.

One important concern in the research is the way in which the family selects and controls television viewing. Here again the initial data indicate wide variations.

Some families run a "tight ship" with strict rules about television, while others make little attempt to control what is seen. Some make decisions in advance, planning their time schedules so as to incorporate programs they wish to see, while others simply turn on the set and watch what happens to appear at a given moment. Some families allow television to schedule other aspects of their lives, including meals, while others carefully avoid permitting television to become the family clock.

The issue of how to select from and control television viewing is a basic concern of many parents.

Sometimes parents blame themselves for failing to control television in the way they believe they should and for failing to make the kinds of choices they wish they had made with respect to television. Sometimes parents disagree between themselves as well as with their children over television.

It is important to recognize that the family is made up of different individuals, often with different interests and opinions. At the same time, a family can select from many possible television programs those that most closely fit its values and beliefs.

In one sense it is easier for a family to make choices with respect to television than with respect to schooling. Television is within the privacy of the home and therefore under the control of the family.

There are no laws requiring children to watch television for a certain number of hours each week or to watch particular programs mandated by the state legislature. However, there may be pressures from outside the family to watch television or to view certain programs. For example, children may wish to be able to discuss certain programs with other children at school—or relatives or visitors may arrive and wish to see programs that they ordinarily view.

It is nevertheless true, however, that the family has the right and the opportunity to make decisions about what television to watch and whether to watch at all. Still, many parents find it difficult to turn off the set, even when they disapprove of a particular program.

In thinking about choices, the family must concern itself not merely with whether to watch a given program, but, more importantly, with what other activities television viewing may be replacing.

Does it substitute for family rituals, family talk, reading, writing, outdoor exercise, hobbies, museum visits, movies, travel?

Such a list could continue indefinitely and would be different for each family. But the question can easily be posed in a meaningful way in any family: what else might we be doing instead of watching television?

Beyond the matter of choice and control is another question: how is television viewing appraised and discussed within the family? Once again the initial data suggest considerable variation.

Some parents make deliberate efforts to watch television with their children and discuss it in the process. Others make television an important basis for family dinner-table conversation. Still others let children discuss television among themselves or watch it individually with minimal interpretation.

It is important for family members to remember that they can and do exercise an influence through their discussions of television programs. Many families do engage in a significant amount of critical discussion of television programs, ranging from the foolishness of commercials to the aesthetic quality of soap operas, to the accuracy of weather predictions, to the interpretation of the news.

Moreover, such discussions take place on an ongoing, day-to-day basis. The impact of this brief, moment-to-moment discussion is undoubtedly considerable, if for no other reason than because it is recurrent and therefore cumulative.

The understanding of how the family mediates television is important not only because an enormous amount of time is devoted to television, but also because the process of choice and selection can become a model for other family approaches to education. Moreover, while parents already have many options with respect to television, those options will increase in the future with the expansion of cable television and the use of videotape cassettes.

All this underlines the importance for families to understand their habits of television viewing, and to recognize that they can exercise control over these habits and modify them if they wish to.

The Family's Role in the Development of Educative Styles and Agenda

Since the family can and does play a vital role in mediating the education of other institutions, it becomes of critical importance to understand the family's contribution to the ways in which individuals make educational decisions.

Individuals have very different styles in their approach to education; that is, they vary in the ways in which they search for, move through, and combine educative experiences. I have called these differences in approach "educative styles."

One important element in educative style is the individual's educational agenda, or the implicit or explicit plans, values, and beliefs in terms of which small-scale as well as large-scale educational decisions are made.

In our research at the Center, we are observing striking differences among people in their approaches to education. These differences are not merely in styles of learning but in broader approaches to education.

Individuals differ, for examples, in the ways they initiate, search for, absorb, synthesize, and critically appraise the various educative influences in their environment.

Some individuals zestfully look for new experiences, while others wait for opportunities to come to them. Some are playful; others are somber. Some seek perfection; others have less exacting standards of excellence. Some are gregarious; others are loners.

Families, too, can be seen as having very different approaches to the education of their children, or, to continue the phrase, different educative styles. Some families actively search for and examine educational opportunities, while others more passively accept life as it comes to them.

In one of our research studies, we are following teenagers through the course of their day to see what they learn in different situations—at home, at school, with friends, from others in the neighborhood and community

—and how they combine these different educative experiences.

One interesting finding in this research (which is still in progress) is the variety of ways in which educational patterns emerge. Simple charting of the daily experience of different teenagers reveals certain common patterns—all attend school and most spend fairly standard amounts of time sleeping and eating—but beyond this there is great variety in their sources of education.

Some teenagers spend large amounts of time watching television. Others engage in a variety of extracurricular activities, including language lessons, music school, and church programs. Others spend more time in unplanned activity.

If we were to rank the situations and institutions that are most important educationally for different teenagers (even different teenagers within the same family), using as a criterion the amount of time spent in each situation or institution, a wide range of patterns would result.

For some the ranking would be (in order of descending importance) family, school, extracurricular, school lessons, friends, relatives, television. For others the ranking would be television, other family members, friends, school.

The variety of sources of education—and the multiplicity of ways in which different individuals and families move through and combine diverse educative experiences—all imply that there are many options and possibilities available to the family.

To raise the issue of the family's educative style and agenda is immediately to confront the dilemma of how the family deals with outside educational influences of which it approves or disapproves. Should the parent hold back and hope that the influence will be minimal, or should the parent intervene and risk rebellion by the child? The problem is not evident in some instances because the influences in the environment tend to be those of which the family approves.

In other instances, however, the family faces the classic dilemma of how to deal with influences that run counter to the family's values and aspirations for the child.

For example, a commonly recognized problem for the parent is how to deal with friends of the child whose influence seems to go in directions that the parent would prefer to avoid. Some have described this dilemma as the choice between innocence and virtue.

The vast array of educational opportunities and possibilities places a considerable burden of choice upon the parent. It is a truism that the most important decisions a parent makes with respect to his or her children are those concerning education.

Education has been and remains a vital route to happiness and success in our society, and this realization can weigh heavily on parents. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that educational decisions are not necessarily made all of a piece at one time and forever. Education is a lifelong process.

In the end, the development of an educational agenda that reflects a family's most important beliefs and commitments calls into play all of the time-honored arts of living.

Moreover, in pursuing an educational agenda, one must recognize that what is appropriate for a five-year-old may not be appropriate for a 15-year-old; that effective education requires an ever shifting balance between restraint and intervention, criticism and encouragement, lofty ambitions and realistic plans; and that ultimately the outcomes of education are often ironic.

The hope must be that with greater understanding of the process at work, each family can develop an active educational agenda and through that agenda intelligently direct its educational life to reflect its deepest values.

Hope Jensen Leichter is professor and chairperson of the Department of Family and Community Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. She is known best, perhaps, for her recent volume, *The Family as Educator*. Dr. Leichter's professional training is as a sociologist, and she received her Ph.D. from Harvard University.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. From the point of view of each of the members of your family: (a) what are the most important ways in which the family serves as educator? (b) what are the most important sources of education in addition to the family and the school?
2. What part have grandparents played in the education of your children?
3. In what ways do your children educate each other?
4. What have been the most effective ways of supplementing your children's education in school?
5. What kinds of discussions do you have about television in your family? In your experience what are the most effective ways of making constructive educational use of television? Do you attempt to coordinate television viewing with school subjects? If your family were to spend less time watching television, what other activities might you engage in instead?
6. What are the most important educational choices that a family makes? For very young children? For elementary school children? For teenagers? For adults?

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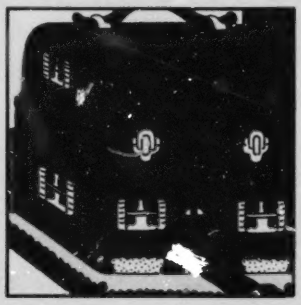
Work and the American Family



By Kevin Dougherty, Gail Howrigan, Laura Lein, Ph.D., and Heather Weiss of the Working Family Project

It is hard to open a magazine or newspaper these days without running across some discussion of the changing American family. Many of the changes are said to revolve around the ever-increasing number of wives and mothers who enter the labor force. Other changes are said to revolve around the shift in time when parents decide to have children and in the number of years they devote to child rearing. These new patterns of childbearing—coupled with women's increased participation in the labor force—have considerably influenced the amount of time families spend together and how they work out the rhythms of their daily lives.

By focusing on such issues as child-care arrangements, job satisfaction, and the different kinds of activities performed in the home and the work place, we hope to break down some of the common stereotypes about "the declining American family" that fill our newspapers and magazines today. We intend to point up, for example, the positive as well as the negative aspects of women's increasing participation in the work force. But above all, we want to offer a realistic portrait of the family and work life as they exist in America today.

To do so, we have drawn freely from our research as members of the Working Family Project, in which we interviewed in depth 25 middle-income families in the Boston area. In these families both husband and wife are employed, some in blue-collar and some in white-collar jobs.

Because we want our portrait of family and work life in this brochure to be evocative, we have included, verbatim, the words of family members as they spoke to us during their interviews. Their words often provide the most vivid insight into their lives and allow others to empathize with the common problems and opportunities shaping the lives of these families today.

The Family Life Cycle

Over the course of the twentieth century, noteworthy changes have occurred in the timing of major family events like marriage, birth, and death. Scholars use the concept of the "family life cycle" to describe the sequence of these events, starting from the time a couple marries, extending through the childbearing and child-rearing years, proceeding on into the "empty nest" period, when all of the children leave home, and ending, finally, when one of the spouses dies.

Women are now having their first child later, spacing their children closer together, and having fewer of them. Moreover, there is now generally a 20-year period between the marriage of a family's last child and the death of one of the parents. As a result, according to the sociologist Mary Jo Bane, couples in the future will spend 18 percent of their married lives raising young children, whereas a century ago that figure was 54 percent.

To complicate the picture further, families during and after the child-rearing stage experience other events that fundamentally reshape their structure, such as divorce, death of a family member, remarriage, or support of a dependent older person.

About 40 percent of all marriages are currently ending in divorce; 30 to 40 percent of widowed elderly people live with at least one relative. At different stages in the life cycle, family membership changes dramatically. In short, modern American families are always in the process of "becoming."

What, then, is a family?

While most scholars would agree that the family is an institution found in all human societies, there is little agreement on what a family is or what it does. Neither in this country nor elsewhere does membership in a family necessarily depend on living together. In fact, the membership and living arrangements of families vary widely over the world.

The most common family form outside of the industrial West is the "extended family," as contrasted with the more common American "nuclear family." The "nuclear family" arrangement is limited to a married couple and its children, whereas the "extended family" includes other family members such as parents, brothers and sisters, or other relatives of the couple.

In this country most young couples seek independence and equality by establishing separate homes. In the early 1970s only about 6 percent of young married couples (ages 18-24) lived with relatives, according to census data. As Bane has concluded, "married children may prefer to be hard up in their own homes rather than well-off with their parents." On the other hand, many middle-aged couples have one or more elderly parents living with them.

Each type of family organization, nuclear and extended, has its advantages and costs. Ours—the nuclear family—gives us independence, mobility, and privacy. But to get these, we tend to trade off sociability, daily help with child care and household tasks, and nearby relatives with whom to pool resources when times are hard. Furthermore, the high value we place on independence also increases the pressure to be successful in the labor market.

Time, work, and families

Although it may not appear obvious at first, there are different ways of thinking about time itself. Typically, in our discussions with

Boston-area families with children, we found that it was not long before the topic of time came up.

One mother responded to the question, "Did it change you to become a parent?" as follows:

I don't know whether it changed me—it brought things to light that I never knew were there, maybe, tremendous sense of responsibility, an awful sense of time, none of it, and continuous care.

Most people in modern industrial societies look on time as something to be measured in intervals of seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, and years. We speak of time as saved or spent as though it were a commodity or currency. We distinguish, further, between work time and free time, and in so doing separate work from all the other parts of our lives.

People have not always looked at time this way. In the past, as historians such as E. P. Thompson point out, people had a more "task-oriented" notion of time and its use. Their activities were dictated by the demands of chores rather than by the hour or the clock. They plowed until the field was done or it was too dark to see. A task orientation toward time meant that work and leisure were more closely woven together than they are in today's "clock-oriented" society.

Although workdays in times past may have been long, they frequently were separated by holidays and interrupted by breaks for naps, visits to local taverns, and recreation.

Since the industrial revolution, most workers have had to be clock- rather than task-oriented. In the family, however, this has less clearly been the case. "The rhythms of women's work in the home are not wholly attuned to the measurement of the clock," observes Thompson about women in the present as well as in the past, for "the mother of young children has an imperfect sense of time and attends to other human tides."

For many men, too, the shift from work to home at the end of the day occasions a more relaxed and task-oriented sense of time. Similarly, both parents find it difficult to separate the recreational from the work aspects of child care because reading a bedtime story or building a block house is at once work and play. So the family, unlike the work place, is often a place where work and play remain closely integrated.

Paid Work

Adult family members spend most of their time working. This work is of two kinds—what economists call "paid" or "market work" and "home work." Home work includes the car repairs a man does himself on Saturday morning as well as the housework and child care duties that family members perform. In this section, however, we will focus on participation in the paid labor force.

Historically, the amount of time people spend in paid work has been declining. The average work week for nonagricultural employees decreased from 58.4 hours in 1901 to 38.1 hours in 1975. Most of the decline in the average work week occurred in the period before 1948. Since then, it has declined only 2.8 hours.

The decline of the work week has not necessarily increased the amount of free time. Increasing numbers of men moonlight and do home renovation and repair. As more women enter the paid labor force, their free time decreases because of time spent on the job.

More time is spent commuting because of greater traffic congestion and longer commuting distances. Working mothers, because they are doing paid work as well as carrying most of the burden of housework and child care, average two hours less of free time a day than do working fathers and one hour less than do housewives with children.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOR FORCE

The increasing number of married women employed outside the home over the last 35 years is one of the most spectacular changes in the composition of the labor force. A comparison of the figures from 1940 and 1974 illustrates the change.

According to the census, 14 percent of all married women living with their husbands were working in 1940. By 1974, the Labor Department's Current Population Survey indicated that 43 percent of married women living with their husbands had joined the paid labor force.

The same survey also showed that the largest recent increase in rates of employment occurred among women who in the past were considered least likely to work—those with children under six years of age. Fully 39 percent of married women with children between three and five years of age and 31 percent of those with children under the age of three were in the labor force.

At the turn of the century, women between the ages of 14 and 24 were the largest age group working, suggesting that many young women worked until marriage and then left the labor market. Since then, married women in all age groups have been entering the labor force in increasing numbers.

As sociologist Valerie Oppenheimer points out, the typical female worker in 1970 is no longer young and single. Rather, "the female labor force today is not very different from the adult female population as a whole."

Women, like men, work for a number of reasons, only one of which is money. Intensive research studies such as the Working Family Project provide a complicated picture of why married women work.

Although working women often highlight the importance of financial considerations, this emphasis frequently appears to be part of a rationalization for other reasons that are less culturally or personally acceptable. These other reasons can range from intrinsic satisfaction with their jobs to the uneasily expressed desire to leave home and child-care responsibilities for part of the day.

To cast light on the motivation and commitment of women to work, we asked the women we interviewed whether they would continue to work if they no longer needed the money—for instance, if they won the state lottery. One woman's response was fairly typical. She said that she would keep on working part time because "I think I'd go crazy being at home all the time."

In light of present trends, it appears that participation by married women in work outside the home will continue to grow, and that women will be more likely to work at the same time they are rearing their children than they have in the past.

THE IMPACT OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Although men also balance work and family demands, being the main wage earner is generally more central to their family role. Consequently, unemployment is the biggest threat to their family role.

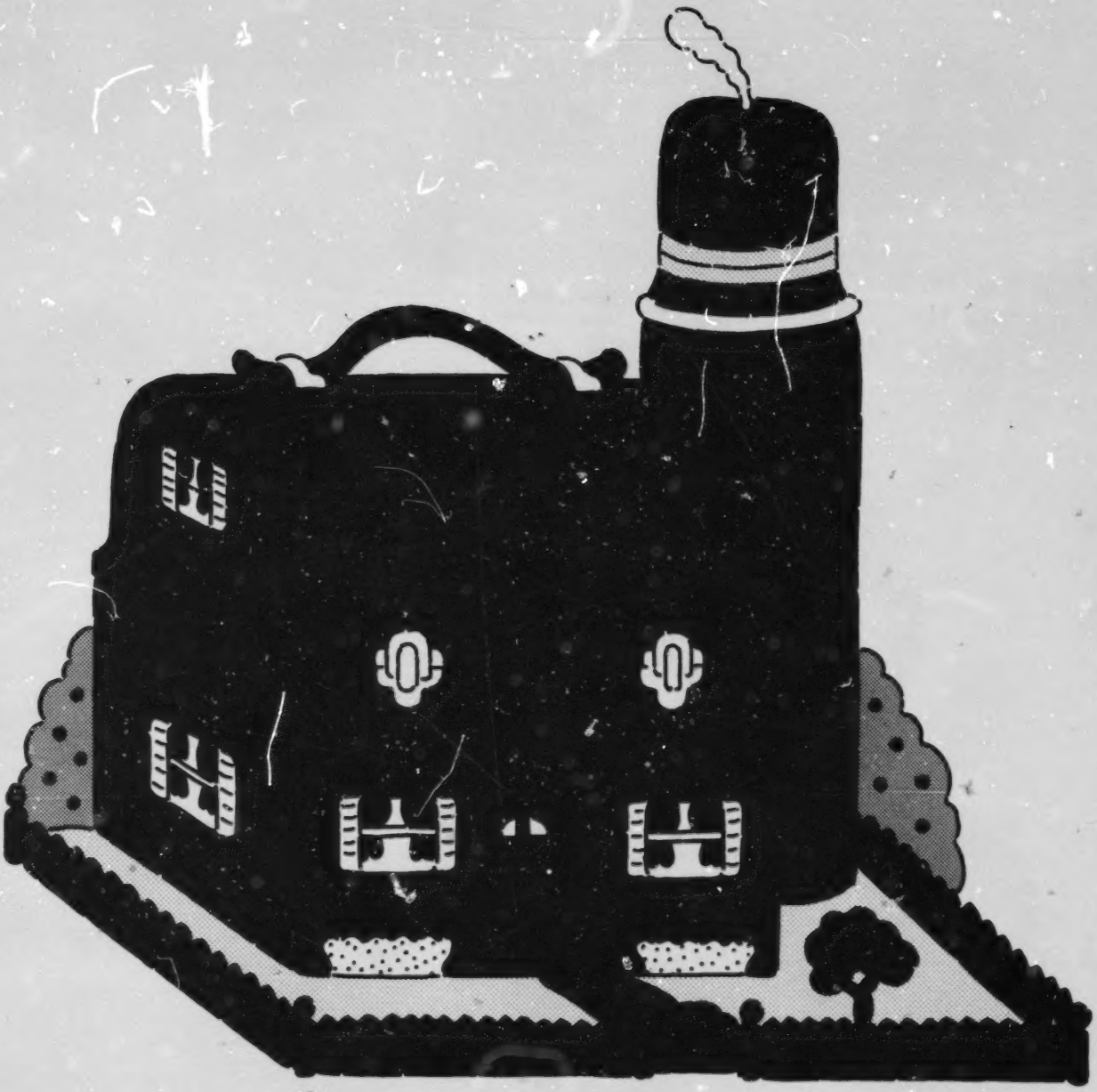
Rates of unemployment in the United States have risen steadily—from an average of 3.5 percent in 1969 to 7.7 percent in 1976. The government estimates that about 7.5 million people were out of work last year.

Though overall national unemployment figures do capture some of the impact of unemployment, they also have a deceptive quality. For one thing, many groups have rates that are much higher than the national average.

In 1976, for example, the average unemployment rate for nonwhites 16 years of age and older was 12.7 percent. The unemployment rate for teenagers between 16 and 19 years of age was 19.7 percent, while for black teenagers it was 37.1 percent. Furthermore, it is now widely recognized that these figures substantially undercount the real incidence of unemployment.

To appreciate fully the impact of unemployment on a husband and father, we also have to take into account its personal consequences. As one unemployed father put it:

You gotta have a steady job, or you're just out in left field, believe me . . . it's not like you can relax. If you know if you're going to work in



the morning at eight you can relax, but if not . . .

The heaviness of their responsibility makes some men feel positively about their wives working; some even expect them to work:

What I dislike most [about being a man and husband are] all the responsibilities that seem to come with being the male in the family . . . I don't mind the challenge of these responsibilities, and I go ahead and tackle them. But oftentimes, what I wonder is why . . . why over the years it's been the burden of men. And now with the new breakthrough of women's liberation, more equality, sharing it more. It's coming.

But other men are troubled by their wives working. One man describes how he felt about his wife working when they were first married:

I sort of, I guess, felt inadequate. I did not like this thing of having to have my wife work to allow us adequate income to survive on. . . . I wanted to know that . . . [my family] could depend on me. I didn't want to go through life feeling that she had to work. . . . There were occasional times when she gave the impression that she felt a little independent because of this. And I didn't care for that.

Attitudes toward work

Two national surveys recently commissioned by the U.S. Department of Labor uncovered some surprising job attitudes. They found that men and women do not differ greatly on what they consider important about jobs.

Women, for example, were just as likely as men to consider having good supervisors, interesting work, and the opportunity to develop and use abilities as "very important" aspects of jobs. On the other hand, women were significantly more likely than men to rate having friendly and helpful co-workers, pleasant physical surroundings, and good hours and easy commuting as "very important."

That women consider good working hours and ease of commuting more important than do men is not, on reflection, at all surprising. It indirectly reveals what our research in Boston clearly demonstrated—namely, that employed women continue to carry the major responsibility for work in the home.

In order to be able to shoulder their dual responsibilities, employed mothers have to juggle their schedules carefully and make the most of their time. Consider the typical schedule of one mother employed full time.

She rises at 5:30 each morning of the week to begin getting her two sons, ages four and six, ready for school. Chris, the older son, is in first grade, and Oliver attends nursery school from 9 to 12, two days a week. Since his mother has to leave by 8:00 a.m., a nearby friend takes Oliver to and from nursery school, and Chris waits at a friend's home until time to go to school.

On his way from school at 2:30, Chris picks up Oliver, and the two go to another neighbor's house until their mother picks them up at 5:00 on her way home from work. Once home, she fixes dinner. After dinner, the evenings are taken up by playing with the children, cleaning up the kitchen, and going to a business school class. She finally goes to bed at 11:00, averaging six-and-a-half or seven hours of sleep each night.

The Labor Department surveys also discovered widespread job dissatisfaction among all workers, men and women. A service manager for an appliance company and his wife indicate the impact that job dissatisfaction can have on personal and family life. He describes his job:

. . . as time progressed, the responsibilities got greater . . . this has developed because of the way the company has changed their policies over the years. . . . It's at the point now where I have to spend a great deal of time on office matters. And, that coupled with the fact that the pressures get greater as the years go by, consumerism, what have you . . . makes it more and more difficult. It's at the point now where . . . I come home at night, and I don't feel I've accomplished anything.

His wife indicates how these job conditions affect his family and him:

There are times when he hates it. If he didn't have financial obligations like house payments—any financial worries—he would get out of that business and try something where he could be his own boss. . . . But he's stuck in it. . . . I get very depressed sometimes, not because he is making me depressed, but because I see what it's doing to him.

But, just as work outside the home can cause problems for family life, it can also be a source of great pleasure and support. In some occupations, there is a close association between work and family social life. One fire fighter and his wife, for example, devote considerable time to parties, award dinners, weddings, and (unfortunately) wakes involving fire fighters and their families.

For women, working outside the home can also be a source of many nonmonetary benefits. For one clerical worker an attraction of working outside the home is the opportunity for adult company. She leaves for work early so she can have a cup of coffee with her co-workers. Though many working mothers worry about the possible adverse effects of their work on their children, several feel that outside work allows them to be better mothers. As one mother puts it:

When you have a part-time job, no matter where you are, I see a lot of the world and what's going on . . . not just your little close-knit circle. Then when your kids come home and talk to you, you at least know these things are going on . . . even if you don't know so much about them.

In giving a full picture of how work and family life are related, we also have to consider how family life affects work. For women, the requirements of child care have a particularly great impact on outside work, as one mother points out:

To a certain extent I can only take on certain responsibilities at work. You know I can't work late or overtime. They asked me what if your children got sick, and of course I would have to put my responsibility to my children ahead of my responsibility to my boss. I wouldn't say that to my boss, of course.

Other women we interviewed took evening or part-time jobs in order to be with their children during the day.

For men, family considerations also play a role in their job decisions. For example, a foreman for a transportation company plans to go on the day shift once his children are in school so he can see them in the evening. More importantly, men seem to settle down to long-term jobs after the birth of the first child. Since they have more dependents to provide for, job security becomes more important.

Home Work: Child Care and Housework

Just as paid work outside the home absorbs much of the energy and attention of married couples and places restrictions on their use of time, so does "home work": the combination of child care, housework, and other family maintenance chores.

Any parent—at the end of a long day of changing diapers, settling squabbles, answering questions, cooking, cleaning, shopping, and doing the laundry—would confirm that child care and housework are real work.

Estimates of how much it would cost to hire someone to provide the services of a housewife range from $8,000 to $13,000 a year.

For the majority of young couples marrying these days, the wife continues to work after the wedding at least until the arrival of the first child. As a result, their lives at first are very much as they were before marriage.

New parents, however, often find themselves unprepared for the impact a first child can have on their lives. The arrival of children can drastically change both marital relationships and work-life scheduling. Although fond of his children, one father comments:

I was shocked, quite shocked when I had my first child . . . I'm sure there can't ever be a school for parents . . . I'm sure that I've had in my time as a parent regrets, not regrets,

resentments against my children . . . for imposing upon my own time, my own life, and so on . . .

Many families we interviewed were also aware of the economic consequences of having children. As one mother said:

. . . when I can see the situation I wish we had worked longer before we had children and got our house and everything . . . But my girlfriend is in the situation where she did wait and she doesn't have children and she [owns her own house and has a new car] . . . But those are just material things . . . and to me they [my children] are more important than anything else, they really are.

When a single parent or both parents in intact families decide to work, a number of tough decisions must be made about child care. For some parents, it is important that young children always be in the care of a parent. A mother with such feelings may wait until her children are in school before she goes to work.

Many families depend chiefly on spouses and older children to care for young children. Of those who depend on others to help with child care, 50 percent depend on relatives, 37 percent depend on nonrelatives, and 13 percent depend on institutions.

If families in which both parents work want to handle all child care themselves, they must schedule their employment so that one parent is at home while the other is at work. One result for these couples is that spouses have little time together at home. As one mother said:

I don't like working and having kids, because . . . I really want to be home with the kids and it is the only time I have with J [her husband] and here I am at work . . . I really resent it and then I get irritable, I really do.

Many parents prefer to leave their children with people they know very well—often relatives if families have them nearby. One mother noted:

When my kids are left with my family, I know they are loving them just like we would . . . whereas if a baby-sitter is there, you don't really know too much about her . . . she doesn't care. They're not her kids.

Relatives are also the people many parents turn to for help in an emergency, if one parent is ill and the other must get to work. But many families live too far from their relatives or feel that their relatives cannot provide the best possible care.

Friends and neighbors are another possible source of child-care help. However, most parents are reluctant to ask for regular long-term child care unless they can return the favor.

One solution is exchanging child care. One woman describes a child-care exchange involving at least three families. She works evenings so she is most often on call in the mornings and afternoons.

Leila takes the Marsh's kids and mine [in the evenings]. Now I'll watch hers and the Marsh's little boy. It's done for nothing—there's no money, it's just a friendly thing. It does get tiring sometimes. I had five the other day, and I was glad to see them go.
[She laughs]

This kind of reciprocal help can be important for mothers of preschoolers and for mothers of school-age children who cannot be home when their children come home from school. However, exchange arrangements are not possible when both parents work full time, as they do not have the time to take care of other families' children.

Families who feel it is particularly important that the illness of a baby-sitter or some other difficulty not interrupt the child care often rely on more institutional kinds of child care. Frequently, these families find institutional care a valuable and important part of their children's lives. As one mother explained:

One of the reasons we put him in day care was so he could begin to understand other people a lot sooner, and not become so dependent on one person . . . So regardless of whether I work or not, there are a lot of reasons why people should have this group thing right away.

An important issue for such families is the cost of child care. Full-time day care for preschoolers often costs $40 to $50 a week. After-school programs for older children also cost varying amounts.

Obviously, then, a mother's decision about when to work and how much to work will be related to the cost of providing care for her children. However, mothers who are bringing home a good salary and see their jobs as opportunities for advancement and careers may feel more justified in incurring the expense.

In many ways, solutions to child-care issues represent a compromise between the two worlds of work and family. However, this does not mean that parents are casual or unconcerned about the care their children receive. On the contrary, our research reveals that families direct a great deal of attention and effort toward finding child-care arrangements that suit the children, reassure the parents, and are feasible in terms of convenience and cost.

Housework and household maintenance tasks are as much a problem for modern American families as is child care. While wives who work make an important contribution to the financial support of their families—traditionally the husband's responsibility alone—most husbands are reluctant to take on a larger share of the housework.

In a study of 1,300 households, two home economists, Kathryn Walker and Margaret Woods, discovered that in general the husband does very little more (and in some cases less!) around the house when the wife/mother is employed. According to Walker and Woods, in families with children, the husbands of nonemployed wives spend an average of 1.6 hours a day in household work, while those of employed wives spend an average of only 1.7 hours. The comparable figures for the wives are 8.3 and 5.8 hours. Surprisingly, children contribute little help in either type of family, although they do help significantly in single-parent families.

Of course, the amount the husband helps out varies from family to family. The husband is most likely to contribute when the children are very young and when there are many children. But even in such households the wife often wishes for more help than she gets from her husband, while the husband feels that he is already helping out more than his male friends do.

In fact, the role the husband plays in home work is determined more by his attitude toward helping out than by practical considerations—such as the numbers and ages of his children or the amount of hours he and his wife work.

In some homes the husband's participation in home work is a volatile issue. As one husband expresses it:

Now she feels I should help her more around the house, where she's working. Of course, I don't agree with her 100 percent there. This is something we've never agreed on, and I don't think we ever will. How can she compare her work [secretary] with me laying brick all day. . . . So, after supper, I just wanted to go downstairs and watch the news. 'Well, what about the house?' [imitating wife]. She didn't actually come out and say it, but you know she kind of hinted. So I said, well okay. I'll take the kids down with me. But I guess she feels I should do more. I know I do more than most of the guys I know as far as helping their wives. We talk about it at work. We talk about it when we have a get-together. The men say to me, 'What, are you crazy?' We get very personal, you know. The guys want to kill me. 'You—you're getting us in trouble,' and the wives say, 'Does he really?'

However helpful they are, husbands are more willing to do some tasks than others. In general, they prefer child care to other household work, probably because it is more enjoyable. Of non-child-care tasks, they are more likely to do those that are less repetitious—for example, they prefer to put up storm windows rather than do laundry.

Then, too, most of the husbands' chores,

in contrast with the wives', do not have to be done immediately; they can be postponed or even hired out as a last resort.

Finally, our research study revealed frequent discrepancies in husbands' and wives' perceptions of who does which jobs how often. Men often indicated they "shared" a task when, in fact, they could remember only a single instance of having done it.

Conflict over these issues of sharing home work is common in families where both parents work, as many of you doubtless realize from your own experience. Resolving this conflict is difficult.

In most families, the wife continues to have major responsibility for home work but reduces her standards of housekeeping and thus the hours she spends doing it. However, other husbands in our study see household tasks as a family responsibility, and not just the wife's, and are willing to help out so that the family can spend time together in enjoyable activities.

Under a multitude of pressures from inside and outside the family group, the family has not disappeared. Rather, it has changed in several important respects.

For example, the relationship between family and work has changed – in response to such developments as women's aspirations for freer and fuller participation in work outside the home, changes in job attitudes, and new views concerning how child care and housework should be handled.

But these changes do not mean that people no longer care about family ties. The mother who works or the father who shares the home work care as much about maintaining the strength of their families as the mother who stays home full time and the father who gives most of his time and thought to his job and the financial support of his family.

Many of the families in our research study have experienced the difficulties involved in making a home. But far from moving away from family life, they continue to look to the family as their major source of affection and support, the setting in which to plan the important task of rearing children, and a base from which to pursue work or training.

The Working Family Project is a group of young scholars at the Center for the Study of Public Policy. Funds for research by the Project have been provided by the National Institute of Education and the National Institute of Mental Health. Kevin Dougherty, Gail Howrigan, and Heather Weiss are doctoral students at Harvard University. Laura Lein, principal investigator, received her Ph.D. in social anthropology from Harvard University.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1 If a mother is employed outside the home, what do you think the responsibilities of other members of her family should be? How should tasks be allocated among family members? What do you think children should be expected to do around the house?

2 If a mother of young children wishes to or needs to work, what would be the characteristics of the ideal job for her (even if such a job does not now exist) – hours, location, benefits, etc.?

3 Some people feel that the responsibility of being family provider is exacting from husbands too great a cost in physical and mental health, and that something must be done to change male work roles. How do you feel?

4 What aspects of the work world interfere with family life as you would like to live it?

5 Think about your regular daily schedule: How much time do you spend on housework, on the job, with your children, alone, in recreation, with your spouse? What do you feel would be an ideal schedule for you? What would you most like to change?

6 Some argue that the American family is increasingly isolated – they seldom see relatives, friends, or neighbors. Is your contact with other people greater or less than in your parents' family? What do you share with others (for instance, babysitting time, or use of appliances such as a lawn mower)?

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The Working Family Project is a team of sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists working with dual-worker families in the Boston area. Principal investigator: Laura Lein. Administrator: Janet Lennon. Research collaborators: Kevin Dougherty, Maureen Durham, Gail Howrigan, Laura Lein, Michael Pratt, Michael Schudson, Ronald Thomas, Heather Weiss. Preliminary report, *Work and Family Life*, 1974.

Children's Rights and How Parents Can Protect Them

By Michael W. Apple, Ed.D.

In this brochure we will examine a number of the public institutions that profoundly shape the future of our children, focusing especially on the issue of "children's rights" and what parents can do and should do to help preserve them. We will also examine the various kinds of "rights" that children and parents should have, and suggest several concrete steps parents can take as advocates for children when institutions respond in a manner inconsistent with the law.

To some of you the tone of what is said here may seem unduly "political" because, in effect, this is a summons for a significant improvement in the practices of school personnel and others, and for what lawyers term an "advocacy framework" between parents and the representatives of public institutions.

But I believe these goals are part of the very best tradition of the PTA, and that advocacy – "parent power" – is one very important means of improving the quality of life for our children.

We shall be concentrating primarily on the public schools, for that is where most of my experience as a child advocate lies. I do not want to suggest that schools are usually awful places. Many schools and classrooms are alive with learning; respect children as individuals; and encourage parental participation. Nor do I wish to suggest that teachers, administrators, and other school personnel are uncaring. Many outstanding individuals teach in our public schools, and they do care – very much – about the children in their classrooms.

Nonetheless, it is true that many children suffer serious educational, emotional, and even physical harm in schools. Some children are "pushed out" of school by illegal suspensions and expulsions. Others are classified as "slow" or "learning disabled" – with little objective evidence to validate such labels. Others sit in class bored, day after day.

As the Carnegie Commission noted in 1970, too many schools are preoccupied with maintaining "order and control" rather than with education. Obviously, some of our public schools are beset with some serious faults – faults that parents, with sufficient motivation and knowledge, could do much to change. Advocacy – or the public exercise of parental power – is one very important and, up to now, underutilized way to bring about these changes.

Legal and Special Rights of Children

Children are citizens; they are guaranteed certain rights by the very fact that the Constitution protects all persons. This view – that children possess rights simply because they are persons – has had a long gestation.

As a society, we have been involved in a slow progression from earlier attitudes in the United States and England, where children were perceived as a form of property, as "chattels." Children then had many duties, but few rights.

In addition to being "chattels," children were also perceived as inherently evil. The eighteenth-century theologian Jonathan Edwards, for example, spoke for a generation of parents and educators when he described children as "young vipers" who through rigorous training, discipline, and duties would eventually transcend their innately evil nature. It was simply unheard of during this period to think of children as persons with rights as well as obligations.

Today such a description of children seems rather odd. Most of us recognize children as individuals in their own right. In recent years a new body of law has been coming into being which solidifies the contemporary view of children as "young citizens" rather than as "young vipers."

This new body of law tries to strike a difficult balance between the public's need to control disruptive behavior and the child's need to be protected from unconstitutional constraint, to be regarded as more than property. The law increasingly sees children as individuals in a larger political community who require special protections and constraints because they are young and immature, but who nevertheless have constitutional rights as citizens under the law.

That children are different from adults in several special ways is as important a consideration as their improved status under the law. Precisely because children *are* children, their special needs and interests are increasingly being recognized as fundamental rights. These rights are usually based on physical or psychological needs – such as the necessity for affectionate and close relationships; the need to be protected from severe emotional harm; the need to be physically healthy; and so on.

Hence, when we talk about the "rights of children," we are talking about two things: the necessity to guarantee that children are treated fairly and justly (in such areas as school discipline, discrimination, etc.), and the necessity to guarantee that they are psychologically and physically secure (ensuring adequate nutritional and recreational facilities; preventing child abuse; etc.). Without secure and healthy family and school environments, our young may suffer even more potent and lasting damage than they would from the denial of legal rights.

In the Best Interests of the Child?

Usually our public institutions have operated

on the principle that everything they do is "in the best interests of the child." This assumption, when put into practice, can be used to justify all manner of conduct toward children, to ignore children as real persons in their own right, and to mask the reality that institutions do not always conduct themselves properly. Institutions, as a result, can harm as well as help.

Consider an interesting historical example. In the nineteenth century many leading citizens were horrified about the upbringing of desperately poor children who grew up in festering urban slums. The experiences of these children led them inexorably (or so it seemed) into petty criminal behavior, and eventually into jail cells where they mixed with derelict adults who taught them to become even "better" criminals.

To correct these evils, leading nineteenth-century citizens, acting "in the best interests of the child," worked hard to establish a juvenile justice system that would separate young offenders from hardened criminals.

Ideally this system would provide children with guidance rather than punishment. It would, for example, place "wayward" children in juvenile "homes" in the countryside where they could be reformed and be taught the school curriculum as well as useful occupations. It would treat each child in court as an individual, paying little attention to his actual crimes and focusing instead on his underlying educational and emotional difficulties.

Now this certainly sounds benevolent and beneficial. Who could argue against such a humane set of goals? However, in practice these new plans had some very real negative consequences. Let us mention just a few.

Because of inadequate funds (a familiar problem, to say the least!) the juvenile "homes" swiftly turned into miniature prisons almost devoid of any educational activity.

Equally important, children lost a number of the legal safeguards that all Americans were supposed to be guaranteed. Children could be sent to reformatory institutions merely on the basis of hearsay evidence, and could not dispute the charges against them. They could also be held accountable for so-called "status offenses," that is, acts that would warrant little or no penalty if performed by an adult (for example, running away from home or truancy). Also, children often received lengthier sentences for minor offenses than adults would have received for the same actions.

In short, the new methods of "helping" children in need or in trouble with the law left them unprotected against the power and the whims of the institutions that were supposed to protect children in the first place.

We have a good deal to learn from this kind of historical example. New programs or facilities for children, though created with the best of intentions can have harmful effects if no safeguards are built into them.

No one can doubt, for example, the compassion of the individuals who created the juvenile justice system (including, incidentally, the forerunner of the PTA, the National Congress of Mothers). Yet it is widely accepted now that the system is rather chaotic; that it has consistently abridged children's rights; that it has not curtailed crime; and that it may create as many problems for children and society as it solves.

How can we ensure that the procedures affecting children in public institutions are fair?

From our experience it seems clear that the best way is, first, to make parents aware of the nature of children's rights—legal and special—and, second, to sensitize parents to their potential power as a lobby group on behalf of children.

Constant scrutiny and forceful advocacy are equally essential if parental efforts are ultimately to prove effective.

The Hidden Curriculum and Acting Responsibly

The question is often asked: don't children have *responsibilities* as well as rights?

Parents and others want to know, quite understandably, whether the granting and clarification of rights to children shouldn't be coupled with the children's duty to act responsibly.

The answer is an unqualified yes, of course! In fact, *one of the major reasons for upholding the rights of children is that in so doing we are teaching them models of responsible adult behavior.*

Let us look at this issue more carefully—especially as it affects the situation of children in schools.

We send our children to school not only to learn the rudiments of our society's knowledge. We also expect them to learn to act civilly; to learn to care for and respect other individuals' rights; to treat each other openly and fairly.

But—we must also ask—what negative things do young children learn when school personnel fail to act in similarly civil, respectful, and fair ways?

If institutions as central in the lives of children as public schools do not respect them as people, then it becomes difficult for children to learn to act responsibly themselves. This cause-and-effect relationship becomes especially clear when we consider what sociologists term the "hidden curriculum."

Schools teach many things that teachers, administrators, and parents cannot see openly. For instance, they teach, tacitly, various values, rules, and norms of behavior—the "hidden curriculum"—at the same time they teach mathematics, science, reading, and other subjects in the "overt curriculum." Children learn these values, rules, and norms simply by living in classrooms for five to six hours a day, 180 days a year.

Now some of this "hidden curriculum" may be quite beneficial. Children begin to see the value of cooperative activity, of sharing, of intellectual open-mindedness, and so on.

But what if children are not respected as individuals, if their constitutional rights are continually abridged, if they feel that justice is applied unequally because of sex or ethnic or racial background? Then they will learn indirectly a number of other "lessons" which will stay with them as adults and which run against the grain of the American democratic and pluralistic ethos.

A hidden school curriculum of distrust, cynicism, and lack of respect for others will most likely produce adults who act on these same norms and values. Surely we do not intend this to be the primary outcome of an elementary and secondary education.

In weighing the balance between children's rights and responsibilities, therefore, we must remember that the hidden school curriculum teaches just as potently as the overt curriculum.

Children will internalize very little about the importance of responsible behavior if the adults and public institutions with whom and in which they spend most of their time fail to respect them as individuals.

Some Specifics on the Rights of Children

No brochure of this size can detail all of the legal rights that children presently have or should have, even if we focus just on the rights of children in schools. Some of the legal rights differ from state to state and from community to community.

Nor can we mention more than a few of the special rights that children—simply because they *are* children—must be guaranteed if they are to fulfill their potential.

Because of these limitations, we will concentrate on two areas: the rights of children and parents in school discipline, and the rights of children and parents with regard to student records.

School discipline is one area in which children's rights have received a lot of attention during the past decade. Here the courts, child advocates, and parents have been active in supporting the extension of

due process rights to children.

The Massachusetts Advocacy Center has isolated five questions surrounding the issue of school discipline that should assist parents in pressing for just treatment of so-called "problem children."

1 What authority do schools have to discipline children? Schools have the power to set down *reasonable* rules and regulations about conduct and educational procedures. However, the test of whether a regulation is reasonable is its relation to the educational functions of the school. If a specific rule or procedure does not clearly relate to the school's educational function, then it may be illegal for the school to pass such a rule.

2 In what instances can children be disciplined? Usually if a rule has not been written, then a child cannot be punished for breaking it. Thus, in many areas of the country, any parent or citizen (whether he knows it or not) has a right to receive a copy of the disciplinary code of the district or of its Student Rights Manual. These requests cannot legally be denied.

3 What types of discipline can be administered? There are very specific guidelines limiting the types of discipline that schools can employ. These measures often include such things as corporal punishment, detention, suspension, or expulsion. In order for most of these actions to be taken by school personnel, certain due process rights of children must be followed.

4 What are the rights of children and their parents or advocates in the disciplinary process? While each school or district may have somewhat different rights laid out, rules in individual schools cannot be contrary to school system regulations, state laws, or applicable federal court decisions. It is also important to note again that some schools may not grant these rights unless you insist on them.

At this point it might help to be more specific about "due process rights." Perhaps the best examples are those rights mandated in severe cases where a student has been labeled a "troublemaker" and been given a long-term suspension or expulsion.

Due process rights usually offer parent and child nine guarantees of fairness to protect the child from injustice:

- a right to notification of charges against the child in writing, stating what regulation was broken and what the proposed discipline is to be;
- a right to be told all of the evidence against the child;
- a right to a hearing before the child is severely disciplined;
- a right to representation at this hearing by a lawyer, a child advocate, or someone else;
- a right to a fair and unbiased hearing;
- a right to question and "cross-examine" school personnel who are accusing a child of a serious infraction of school rules;
- a right to present a "defense" and offer different descriptions of what happened;
- a right to a written statement of both the decision and why it was decided in this particular way;
- a right to appeal the decision to a higher school authority such as the superintendent, the school board, etc.

5 The rights mentioned in the last paragraph are not the only rights that apply when a child is punished. For example, it is commonly accepted that parents have the right to a prompt meeting to discuss with school officials the kind of informal or formal disciplinary actions that have been taken—or are about to be taken—against the child.

These disciplinary guidelines are subject to change, of course, but they now have years of precedents behind them. A set of similar protections should be found in every school district throughout the country.

The subject of school records is of no small importance since it affects every child, even children who may never have been disciplined in schools.

A child's entire life can be affected by the kinds of information schools keep about the child and, on request, pass on to other agencies. For example, suppose your local school still keeps anecdotal records about children, and your child's permanent records contain a statement by a teacher to the effect that the child was consistently a "behavior problem" in first grade.

Or, suppose your child is given an IQ test and, for some reason, does poorly. The child then proceeds to do rather well in school, but is labeled an "overachiever" in the anecdotal records. What effect might these situations have on a young student's treatment from future teachers and ultimately, perhaps, on his ability to secure a job or enter college?

Obviously these are only examples. They will, of course, not happen often in school districts that are cautious about their records and aware of their obligations to children. However, such things do occur. When inaccurate or harmful data are kept, the rights we shall now discuss will help in guaranteeing legal and ethical conduct.

Many of these rights are already firmly guaranteed in law, especially by the amended Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act which the National PTA lobbied for and which was passed by Congress. These rights and others are stated in clear language in one of the best advocacy booklets for parents yet published, *Making School Work*.

The following rights are included:

1 To see your child's entire school record upon request and to have it explained to you.

2 To receive a copy of the information in the record before it is destroyed.

3 To add information and comments to the school records, and to ask that unsatisfactory or inaccurate portions of your child's records be changed or deleted.

4 To appeal unsatisfactory decisions made by school officials about your child's records.

5 To permit or refuse third parties to see all or any part of the record.

6 To have the information in your child's files be dealt with in a confidential way by school personnel.

7 To know which school personnel are given information about your child, and when and why.

8 To see copies of nearly all records maintained by the school so long as these records do not identify individual children or parents, or contain confidential information about personnel.

These rights protect children against possible harm by ensuring that schools keep accurate information about them and do not hand out this information to just anybody who asks for it. Yet, at the same time, these rights do not prevent schools from collecting data that may be essential to the well-being of the child, such as health information.

The school is probably the single most important public agency that affects a child. If a child does not succeed in school, his future will be made that much more difficult.

We have looked closely at schools for two other reasons. First, a body of legal precedent concerning the rights of children and parents in schools makes it possible for parents and others to act as advocates for children. Second, because schools are relatively accessible and familiar, it is sometimes easier to take action in schools. Schools are often more responsive to advocacy and pressure at a local level than are juvenile homes, welfare agencies, and the like.

Yet while we have been primarily concerned with children in schools, we must not forget the other agencies that affect many of our young. For example, the juvenile justice system in the United States is in serious disarray. Each year millions of children suffer serious abuse at the hands of their parents and guardians. Day-care and preschool centers are often quite expensive and badly understaffed, with inadequate facilities. Welfare regulations often require that

families break up before payments for children's food, health, and clothing can begin.

Moreover, counseling services are often so expensive or overloaded that troubled parents and children never get help. And a large proportion of the children who are institutionalized, such as the mentally retarded or disturbed, live in surroundings that remind us of prisons.

At the same time, the latest government figures show that the gap between rich and poor Americans is not decreasing but widening – a situation which will affect our children in terms of hunger, substandard housing, and unmet medical, emotional, and educational needs.

All of these indicators show how important it is for us as parents to be concerned about the special rights – as well as the legal rights – of children, and to look outside the school and think about what we want from other public institutions whose activities affect the young.

Parent Advocacy: What You Can Begin to Do

A program of advocacy needs to be seen on two interrelated levels – the local level and the larger state and national arena in which state and federal legislation may be the appropriate goal.

The *process* of advocacy is critical to such a program. Let us turn our attention first to the role of advocacy in a local situation.

There are a number of things that each and every parent can do locally. Regular visits to schools are an essential first step. Since schools are public property, parents have a fundamental right to visit them and inspect what is happening. It is often helpful for a parent to be accompanied by another person so that perceptions can be shared and possible infringements of children's rights can be verified by another individual.

But what happens if you do find something that is disturbing? Many times concerned school officials will respond immediately and positively to your suggestions and to your efforts to secure the rights and services to which your child (or any child) is entitled. However, at other times, issues may not be settled quite so amicably.

Thus, there are a number of "rules" for parent advocacy at the local level that should be kept in mind. Perhaps the most significant one is *organization*. One parent or child advocate cannot always "do it" alone.

By organization we mean something more than a group of people getting together to discuss the common problems and issues they see in schools or other institutions. Getting together is part of the process, to be sure. But more is needed: someone or some small group of people must identify the problem, set the process in motion, and, above all, stay with the developments until a resolution is reached. Without this leadership, efforts at reform will flounder.

Furthermore, by relying on yourself as a single individual, not as a member of an organized group, you may help your own child (and this is certainly good), but since the institution is responding to only one case, many other children may continue to be denied their rights. Therefore, it is critically important for you to inform others who share your concerns and who also believe that the situation can – and should – be changed.

Organizing for advocacy is not always an easy task, of course, but one thing that helps make it easier is focusing on the proper issue. Rather than prepare an all-encompassing list of grievances, choose carefully those important enough to warrant action.

It helps, for example, to select an issue that is easily understood. As a member of the Massachusetts Advocacy Center put it, choose one that is "capable of evoking the sort of emotion that attends the demonstration of a clear injustice."

Appropriate areas to work on first might be the lack of nutritious lunches; unwarranted classification of students; the abridgment of children's and parents' due process protections in school discipline; the absence of bilingual teachers; physical or psychological abuse; or the lack of parental access to school files on children.

After the priorities for advocacy are decided – and your own positions on the issues are clear (what *specifically* do you want the local agency or school to do?) – it is essential that you gather a wide array of facts to support your arguments. This will be a time-consuming and often arduous task. Yet it is here that children's and parents' cases are often won or lost.

If your group knows its specific rights, if you are armed with financial and legal information from local, state, and federal sources, you are in a much stronger position when you confront public officials, who sometimes have incorrect information on guaranteed rights and protections.

For example, neither parents nor local administrators in one district were aware that by law schools had to provide special services to children with handicaps. When the parents found this out, they also learned that state funds were available to pay for these services. Within the year, because of parental advocacy and checking, these services became available.

At times it will be difficult for parent groups, functioning alone, to provide all the checks necessary to ensure that schools are acting in the best interest of children. One means of dealing with this difficulty is to develop a special position, the *children's ombudsman*, whose sole responsibility is to act as the parent's and the child's representative in solving disputes.

The ombudsman is a formal figure in the local district who has the responsibility for acting as an effective spokesperson for parents and children, for acting as a go-between in serious disputes, and for being the primary resource person for current information on parents' and children's rights.

In some districts, the ombudsman might be a parent who has received training at a local university and is hired by the school system on the advice of the PTA. This person symbolizes the active concern of parents for their children's welfare and their right to know all that is going on within school walls.

Models of the ombudsman's position already exist and are expanding rapidly in many institutions that deal with the health and education of the public. In hospitals and welfare facilities, for example, it is not unusual for there to be a citizen's or patient's advocate who identifies and represents the client's needs and provides assistance in seeing that these needs are met.

On issues beyond the local level, large parent organizations like the PTA can also play an important role. The Children's Defense Fund in Cambridge, Massachusetts, led by Marian Wright Edelman, has identified the following as among the most important priorities for lobbying and for parent advocacy above the local level.

THE EXCLUSION OF CHILDREN FROM SCHOOL. In some states more than 5 percent of the children are not in school; in some cities, more than 18 percent. In some communities large numbers of students are suspended or expelled for simple infractions of rules. There is also "functional exclusion" – students whose primary language is Spanish and who cannot understand most of what they hear in school. This type of exclusion is coupled with a large amount of misdiagnosis of minority children, who all too frequently are labeled "retarded" because of their language and culture and then excluded from normal classroom participation and put into "special classes" for the rest of their school careers. Here state and federal policies on exclusion from schools are quite important.

CLASSIFICATION AND TREATMENT OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS. Schools for children with severe handicaps, particularly institutionalized children, are often only custodial facilities. Little or no educational

activity goes on in many of them because of overcrowding, poor staffing, inadequate financing, etc. While recent new federal legislation has won important victories in this area, a clearer commitment to the rights of handicapped and institutionalized children at the state level is essential to assure continued progress. Higher state standards for education in such institutions, for example, would be a significant help in protecting these children.

THE USE OF CHILDREN IN MEDICAL—PARTICULARLY DRUG—RESEARCH AND EXPERIMENTATION. Institutionalized children are often used for medical experimentation without provision being made for adequate informed-consent procedures or other protections. This problem also becomes more important for lobbying and advocacy because of the widespread use of drugs in custodial institutions and schools to calm difficult or hyperactive children. Once again, there are few clear and enforceable policies governing this issue.

THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO PRIVACY IN THE FACE OF GROWING COMPUTERIZATION AND DATA BANKS. As we noted earlier, information about children is often carelessly stored and erroneously shared. Many people in both state and federal government are now involved in preparing legislation devoted to this problem. They need organized support from parent groups. Despite the provisions of the amended Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, privacy is still very much an issue. Many school personnel have found ways to circumvent, ignore, or lessen the impact of the Act, and, moreover, many of the actions parents must take to uphold their children's rights have proven cumbersome and difficult to enforce.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND DAY CARE. Many organizations, including the National PTA, have been active in supporting such federal legislation as the Child and Family Services Act, which would authorize government funds for dealing with the special rights of children. Such legislation would voluntarily authorize funds for local communities and parent organizations to be used for such things as prenatal health care, medical treatment to detect and remedy handicaps, nutrition programs, and a variety of day-care services for children of working parents. If the special needs of children are to be fully recognized in the future as fundamental rights, these kinds of legislation need continuous organized and informed support.

A sixth point should be added to this list. It involves the rights entailed in the education of the children of migratory workers. Here, the guaranteeing of legal *and* special rights is critical. The quality of the housing, medical care, nutrition, and education of migratory children is often at the lowest possible level. Given the fact that migrant workers and their children have little power as a constituency in their own right, legislative policies that protect them need strong support from groups like the National PTA.

In the years since its founding, the National PTA has been in the forefront in the campaign to protect the rights of children. When children were working in sweatshops, it was the PTA that helped pass the first child labor laws. Today—when children are being exposed to an excessive amount of violence on TV—the National PTA has conducted a campaign to reduce this violence.

PTA units throughout the United States need to be ever alert to the forces threatening children's rights, and their members must strive continually to uphold children's legal and special rights. Only if parents take the initiative in asserting the rights of children—the nation's most vulnerable and least powerful group of citizens—can we truly know that "the best interests of the child" will ultimately prevail.

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1 What does the author mean by the term "parent power"? Is your local PTA an agent of "parent power"?

2 The author argues that children, like all Americans, must be viewed as citizens who possess rights as well as duties. Do you agree or disagree?

3 What is the "hidden curriculum"? How can the "hidden curriculum" be used to assure that children learn responsible modes of adult behavior?

4 Are you familiar with the disciplinary codes in your own school system? How do the provisions for protecting children's rights in disciplinary hearings compare with those proposed by the Massachusetts Advocacy Center?

5 Are you familiar with the rules regulating access to school records in your own school system? How do they compare with the guidelines laid out in *Making School Work*?

6 At one time or another, many local PTAs have engaged in what the author terms "advocacy" on behalf of their children. Would the formal designation of an "ombudsman" by your PTA facilitate advocacy in the future?

Additional Readings

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Parents, Children, and Preventive Medicine

By Michael Posner, M.D.

When I was eight years old I attended third grade in a small elementary school in western Massachusetts. My father was a general practitioner with his office in our home, a ten-minute walk from school. My teacher was a short, stern, gray-haired woman. My main task for that year was to develop good penmanship, using a steel-tipped pen dipped in the inkwell on my wooden desk.

I remember a thin, green book we used in school a few times that year for a subject called "health." From that book I learned that washing my face would keep my skin healthy and that carrots were good for night vision. Although my father was a physician, I don't believe that I ever drew a connection between "health" and what he did in his office—which was all white enameled cabinets, strong smells, and shiny instruments.

My son is seven years old. He knows that I take care of children who are friends of his when they are ill and that I make sure they are well before summer camp or school begins. He warns strangers that smoking will cause them harm, and he has learned some true-and-false questions about emphysema from television. But what else should he be learning about health, from whom, and by what means?

Here is the classic dilemma for those whose function it is to prepare the young to live effectively today: How can we balance information for current decision-making against general principles for use in the unknowable future? This dilemma becomes increasingly taxing as information of uncertain quality mushrooms, and as the hazy edge of the future becomes less distant than it used to be.

My goal in this brochure is to organize some aspects of the task parents now confront when they consider the health of their children, and to discuss certain new trends in pediatric medicine that will inevitably affect that task.

I believe that the most important influences on a child's health are found in his family and will continue to be found there, regardless of how health care is delivered or health education is taught in school. The primary responsibility of physicians and other specialists responsible for children's health should not be to make sick children well, but to help families perform effectively as the principal health educators of the young.

Parents and Preventive Medicine

To give some perspective on the forces that influence the health of our children, we will begin by discussing briefly health care for adults.

Even in recent years most health care for adults has centered on the treatment of illness. Insurance plans emphasize protection against expenses during illness and hospitalization. Yet it is not by treating illness that we will create healthier adults.

Critics and analysts of medical care systems increasingly point to the lack of attention paid to preventive medicine in the United States. These critics believe that if physicians would advise, and if we as a society would practice, the precepts of preventive medicine, there would be considerably less illness and the cost of medical care would decrease.

Let us look at preventative medicine in more detail.

As the concept of preventive medicine was originally developed, its cornerstone was a process called "screening." Screening is the evaluation of large numbers of people with tests of various kinds to isolate those individuals with abnormalities that could represent the earliest stages of disease. With the aid of screening techniques, disease can be treated before symptoms develop.

While early detection of disease has an important place in the practice of medicine, I do not believe that this represents true prevention. Prevention must deal more directly with procedures that eliminate or lessen the action of the root causes of disease. For example, the way to prevent scurvy is not to develop more sophisticated means of detection but to assure adequate sources of vitamin C in the diet.

There are many valid "measures of health," most of which are in fact measures of disease. These are countable events that can be related to time and population size, and that can be used to compare the health and illness of different groups of people at various times.

You are probably already familiar with one such measure, the infant mortality rate—defined as the number of infant deaths in the first year of life for each 1,000 live births. Another measure is the disease incidence rate (for example, the number of new cases of tuberculosis per year per 100,000 people), which also helps gauge the health status of a city, county, or state.

You should become aware of these measures as they apply to your own community or region, for they provide a rough yardstick by which you can judge the health of the environment in which you are rearing your children. Also, when subjected to sophisticated analysis by medical researchers, these measures permit evaluation of the relative impact of one element in a health care system upon another.

WHY PREVENTION IS SO IMPORTANT

Experts who have examined the data on disease, some of which have been collected for more than a hundred years, have come up

with a few surprising facts that highlight the importance of preventive medicine.

With rare exceptions the death rates from nearly all major infectious diseases have been declining steadily. However, this decline cannot be attributed to advances in the science of medicine.

Death rates from tuberculosis, for example, were dropping long before it was recognized that the disease was caused by an infectious organism. No sharp decline in the death rate from tuberculosis occurred after the discovery of medications that effectively arrested the infection.

In short, the severity of tuberculosis had diminished before doctors ever knew what caused the disease! In a similar vein, the death rate from measles declined steadily from 1920 to 1965; the number of cases of measles, however, remained relatively unchanged.

Why did the death rate from measles decline while the number of cases of measles remained the same (before effective means of immunization were developed in the mid-1960s)? And why did the death rate from tuberculosis decline long before effective means of treatment were devised?

The main explanation was the rising level of income in this country, which has led to better housing and improved nutrition and which, in turn, has raised the natural resistance to infection and contagion throughout the entire population.

This is not to say that better-trained doctors and superior methods and facilities for treatment had no effect, but rather that interrelated social, economic, and nutritional factors were more important. Social and economic progress exerted far more influence in reducing deaths from illness than new methods of treatment.

Another kind of comparison should illustrate further the importance of basic preventive factors in improving our nation's health. In a perceptive book Victor Fuchs contrasts the health data of white citizens of Utah and Nevada. These states are similar in climate, income levels, amount of urbanization, numbers of physicians, and hospital beds.

Yet for all these apparent similarities, the citizens of Utah are far more healthy than those in Nevada. The differences, as Fuchs points out, are probably related to contrasting life-styles.

Utah is populated primarily by Mormons who were born in the state and whose religious precepts discourage use of alcohol and cigarettes, and encourage stability of home and family life. Nevada's population, on the other hand, is notable for its high consumption of alcohol and tobacco, for frequent movement of residents from one locale to another, and for high divorce rates.

Admittedly this comparison simplifies a complex situation, ignoring genetic differences, for example. The implications, however, are clear enough. How we lead our lives strongly influences the likelihood of our becoming ill.

Since differences in life-styles may have as great an impact on our health as the exercise of medical science, the purpose of preventive medicine must be to isolate the factors that contribute to damaging life-styles, not merely to identify the physical damage after the fact. While medical scientists continue to explore the underlying causes of disease and to develop more sophisticated means of identifying populations at high risk, adults must take action now, for their own sake and that of their children, to point their lives in more healthful directions.

Parents and parental attitudes are the most important and basic elements of any successful health education program. Health education begins during infancy in the home, and health education in the school supplements and complements the home experiences. The essential objectives of health education in the school should be to develop, correct, and reinforce the knowledge, attitudes, and habits of health begun in early life.

Prevention must start early

The importance of beginning preventive efforts early in the life of a human being is becoming increasingly clear. Medical researchers have impressively documented that many diseases which generally do not become serious until adulthood actually begin early in life.

Physicians during the Korean War, for example, were surprised to find advanced coronary artery disease among the young American soldiers killed in battle.

High blood pressure, once thought to be uncommon in childhood, has proved to be rather prevalent, especially in adolescence.

The tendency toward obesity, more and more doctors now believe, begins in infancy.

And, as the Fuchs study of Nevada and Utah revealed, while differences among children were not as great as among adults, death rates among children growing up in Nevada were significantly higher than among children in Utah.

Many if not most of the habit patterns of daily life are laid down in childhood. Most adults cannot remember when they learned to brush their teeth, but their patterns of brushing probably have not changed since they were five or six years old.

This is not to say that adults should give up trying to improve their habits of living—far from it. Medical research has demonstrated clearly, for example, that cessation of smoking or sustained gradual weight loss has beneficial effects at any age. Nonetheless, the time to make the learning a single-step process—eliminating the need to unlearn—is in the early school years.

Obstacles to progress

The first difficulty that today, as in the past, blocks progress in popularizing the preventive approach is the uncertainty of recommendations in many areas of medicine.

For example, although it is clear that obesity is to be avoided and that smoking is related to a variety of ill effects, there is no medical consensus as to how to reduce the risk of developing high blood pressure. Some physicians are convinced that excess salt intake plays a large role. Other physicians feel that a genetic predisposition is primary. And a few people appear to develop high blood pressure from eating too much licorice! Blood pressure is apparently controlled by a combination of inherited mechanisms and environmental factors in ways that are not very well understood.

Until the true nature of high blood pressure is understood, there is no clear-cut way to prevent it by the same kind of simple recommendations that make sense with smoking or obesity. We must fall back on early detection and avoid needlessly limiting an individual's actions out of fear of the unknown.

A second obstacle to the attainment of preventive health goals is how little we know about helping adults, the principal behavior models for the young, to modify their life-styles. Most parents recognize that children learn best in their family settings and invariably imitate adult habits. But even the most well-meaning parents experience great difficulty in eliminating undesirable behavior, as all those who have successfully or unsuccessfully tried to give up tobacco know. It is not easy.

To help themselves as much as their children, parents must be involved at all levels of planning in preventive medicine, and they must be incorporated into school-based efforts in health education. By focusing more public attention on the link between parents' health habits and the well-being of their own and other children, we may hope to modify, and perhaps even change significantly, unhealthy parental life-styles.

Here some words of caution are necessary. In a democratic and culturally diverse nation, we cannot and dare not, force uniform patterns of behavior on families any more than on individuals.

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Each family must be left room to set its own priorities, without feeling threatened or being undermined by well-meaning "experts," either medical or educational.

Each family must think consciously about and seek to preserve its own individuality.

Indeed the notion of life-style, when linked with the goals of preventive health, involves making every individual aware that he is responsible for his own health.

Nutrition and Exercise

The two main areas in which long-term preventive gains can most readily be made for our children are nutrition and exercise. The impact of nutrition and exercise on prevention of disease is generally agreed upon, but these two areas are still largely ignored in childhood. Some general principles for parental guidance can easily be extracted from medical literature.

Fine tuning of a family diet is not possible given the current state of our nutritional knowledge. Families are more likely to incorporate moderate and gradual change into their established life-styles than radical change.

Modest goals could include reducing the family's intake of preprocessed foods, reducing animal fat and protein, increasing raw and partially cooked vegetables and fruits, and generally reducing calories. Small changes are cumulative and significant. These small changes, when based on the conviction that it is everyone's responsibility to understand and exercise individual choice in matters of food intake, are likely to exert further changes.

I need not detail here how much money is spent each year on advertising and promotion to influence children's food preferences. The best defense against these sophisticated and frequently misleading messages is parental influence in the home and the inclusion of nutrition education in a comprehensive program of health education in the school and community.

At its best, nutrition serves as a basis for a healthy body, but regular exercise at virtually all ages is essential to keep the body functioning well. Unfortunately, expert medical opinion on the types of exercise most conducive to health is in conflict with our current national emphasis on competitive team sports.

The sports in which our children (especially males) are urged to excel are not lifelong sources of exercise, a point made repeatedly by James Michener in his recent book, *Sports in America*. Even sports like softball and basketball, which are easier for adults to participate in than football or hockey, require specific equipment, facilities, and the presence of other players. They cannot be enjoyed with regularity in a small family setting or alone.

Furthermore, excellent facilities for exercise, especially the gymnasia of public schools, are often closed on weekends and evenings when families or individuals could be using them. Indoor swimming pools are rare in temperate areas; and where they do exist, they are invariably overcrowded. Track facilities are often reserved for school or club competitors.

Family activities such as regular volleyball, hiking, or cycling take sustained commitment. Family-based exercise admittedly makes unusual demands of discipline and coordination of time. Nonetheless, the importance of parental example in this area—especially for young women, whose exercise habits are generally very poor—cannot be overemphasized.

Some programs that meet the long-range exercise needs of children and adults alike have been developed. For instance, the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation has a lifetime activities and sports program called the PEPI Program, and the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports has a school program. Parents can encourage their schools to participate in programs such as these.

Parents and New Trends in Preventive Pediatric Medicine

One way to evaluate the current health status of our children is to contrast the present with the past. Rather than compare conditions today with the grim picture of a century ago, let us turn to a more recent time—the year 1951, a year increasingly looked upon as part of a happy, carefree Golden Age, but one that was in fact rather grim as far as diseases go. The statistics that follow are an average for the entire United States.

In 1951, in an average section of our country containing 10 million people, 300 persons—a large percentage of them children—were stricken with diphtheria. Twenty of them died.

Effective immunization procedures for the disease were already available at that time but unfortunately they were not reaching enough people. In 1975, by way of contrast, there was only one death and only 20 cases of diphtheria, mainly among adults, for a similar area containing the same number of people.

In 1951, measles struck 20,000 people in each 10 million population and killed 40 children in the same group. In 1975, by comparison, there was only one measles death per 10 million people.

Perhaps the most dramatic statistic from 1951 is the one which indicates that there were 500 cases of polio—mainly among children—in a region of 10 million people, whereas in 1975 there were only six childhood cases nationwide!

Finally, for children ages 5 to 14, the death rate from all causes declined at an annual rate of 3.5 percent between 1951 and 1975.

Though these statistics are impressive, they are easily misleading, for they mask extreme variations in health among different subpopulations in the United States. Of the 23 cases of childhood diphtheria recognized in 1975, for example, eight were among Navajo Indians and five were among Mexican-Americans in Texas. Of the cases of measles, a disproportionate number were among black and Hispanic children.

Even among relatively affluent children there has been a decline in the percentage immunized against polio and measles. In 1973 only two out of every three suburban preschool youngsters were protected against polio. A lag in measles immunizations produced a near epidemic of measles in many cities in 1970 and 1971—and the threat continues today. Parental and community commitment to the goals of preventive medicine must remain high in order to spare children unnecessary illnesses.

Unfortunately, in the underserved minority and poor populations of this nation, poor health continues to lay waste young lives. Lead poisoning, for example, is found almost exclusively among poor children in deteriorating inner cities.

These same neighborhoods are also still churning out cases of childhood tuberculosis and disproportionate numbers of children hospitalized with diarrhea and pneumonia. Moreover, infants in these neighborhoods are ten times more likely to die of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome than babies in the suburbs—and their infant mortality rate is double.

The association between poverty, ignorance, and poor health is an ancient tale, yet it is a continuing hardship for a large segment of our children. While solutions to poverty in our society may continue to elude us, we can eliminate many of the consequences of poverty for the health of our children if we so decide.

For instance, a recent publication of the American Academy of Pediatrics pointed out that over the past few years the share of federal health expenditures for children's services has been declining—in spite of the obvious cost/benefit advantages of prevention over treatment. Since children cannot vote, these priorities must be determined by adults—all of whom, of course, realize that

they will probably reach old age but will never be children again. Child advocacy at these levels requires the infusion of organized parental effort.

Prevention and the "New Morbidity"

While I believe that biomedical problems should remain central to the training of physicians dealing with children, I also feel, as do a number of innovative health professionals, that the state of child health throughout the country would be considerably improved if the focus of medical training were broadened to include what Dr. Robert Haggerty and his colleagues at the University of Rochester have termed the "new morbidity."

Dr. Haggerty and his colleagues extend the range of the physician's concern to such areas as behavior disorders among preschoolers, poor school performance, accidents, and sexual maladjustments in children. The pediatrician—as a community member with special (though not exclusive) interest and training in the health development of children—should play a more creative and aggressive role in helping individual communities resolve these problems.

It is, of course, understandable that you as parents may be skeptical about whether physicians should, as individuals or as groups, take on this new social role. A number of important problems with the new approach have yet to be worked out adequately by the advocates of preventive pediatrics. At the very least, though, you should become aware of these new trends in pediatric medicine so you can respond to them intelligently and, if appropriate, critically.

Let us look briefly, then, at a few of the new areas of pediatric interest that will probably manifest themselves in your community during the next several years.

ACCIDENT PREVENTION

Obviously accidents are not new, but they have become ever more frequent under the influence of technological advances. Over the past two decades—as infectious disease has increasingly come under medical control—accident-related death rates have remained grimly stable.

In 1973, for example, motor vehicle accidents killed 1,090 riders less than five years of age, and 1,650 riders between the ages of 5 and 14. Injuries from motor vehicles, varying in degrees of severity, add up to even larger numbers, estimated at 39 injuries for each death that occurs. By contrast, in 1973 only 116 Americans died of measles, polio, diphtheria, whooping cough, and tetanus.

Experts believe that as many as 70 to 90 percent of the lives lost in motor vehicle accidents could have been saved by the proper use of restraining devices. The sobering implication from these data is that numerous parents fail to make the small investment of time and money needed to take advantage of safety measures, even though their children's lives—quite literally—are at stake.

Although physicians have voiced their commitment to tackle this problem, most of them have shied away from it. This failure to act reflects, most likely, a hesitancy about stepping so far from their conventional concerns. I believe, though, that physicians should become more actively involved in sensitizing public opinion and action on this issue. After all, "anticipatory guidance," even though it has a somewhat paternalistic flavor to it and can become intrusive, has long been considered a legitimate function of the physician who deals with children.

Physicians, to be sure, are aware of the dangers of adverse public reaction to preventive measures on the grounds that personal privacy is being invaded, as occurred, for example, with the 1974 policy of linking the ignition system in automobiles to the use of the seat belt. And most physicians are becoming sensitive (perhaps belatedly) to the importance of respecting the parents' right to sort out behavior options for their families.

Clearly there is no simple answer to the role of the physician in preventing childhood accidents. But the urgency of the issue is apparent. Increased parent-doctor dialogue on the subject, whoever initiates it, can lead to more community awareness of these needless tragedies.

BEHAVIOR AND LEARNING PROBLEMS

Another area in which family physicians are becoming increasingly involved is in the evaluation and treatment of behavior and learning difficulties in children. Recent medical surveys have highlighted the prevalence of these problems.

Although there is variation among communities, approximately 10 to 20 percent of all children are considered by their own parents to be experiencing behavior and learning problems. Because other community agencies are failing to give due recognition to—or to treat—these difficulties, some physicians believe it is their responsibility to do so.

To respond imaginatively to children's behavioral and learning difficulties, pediatricians are trying to develop a more comprehensive approach than is customary in medical practice. Their objective is to develop a "therapeutic plan" for each child to determine the relative contribution of physical, intellectual, and psychosocial factors. In order to do so, pediatricians must increasingly seek out other professionals with established expertise in these areas, such as educational psychologists, counselors, and psychiatric social workers.

The need for this comprehensive approach is suggested in a preliminary research study of children referred to the University of Maryland Central Evaluation Clinic for Children (CECC). Most children, the study revealed, had one or two diagnoses in addition to the most immediate cause of difficulty. The other diagnoses required attention together or separately before the original difficulty could be effectively treated.

Sophisticated remediation of this kind requires the coordination of medical and other professional resources, as well as support for and from parents. Unfortunately, so far this type of coordination has been difficult to achieve.

A follow-up study of a different group of children at the Maryland clinic mentioned above (CECC) revealed that recommendations to parents and schools were carried out only about 70 percent of the time.

In the other 30 percent, some parents and teachers doubtless disagreed with the clinic's recommendations. Others probably became confused once they began to recognize that "professionals" working together in clinics (doctors and educators, for example) often disagree on the proper intervention in individual cases.

Parents, of course, must evaluate for themselves the usefulness of the new medical interest in children's behavior and learning problems. Should they tell their pediatrician, even if he doesn't ask, about behavior difficulties at home or in school that are unrelated to the child's physical well-being?

My feeling is that they should, and that the willingness of professionals and parents to work together to deal with such complex and elusive problems of children will increase expertise and understanding among all involved.

The confusion and occasional conflict parents may witness between physicians and other professionals in clinics like the CECC will gradually diminish; such confusion is only natural in the development of a new interdisciplinary field.

In any case, parental involvement in this area is a must, for the day is clearly over when doctors deal solely with the acutely ill and educators merely expel students who "do not fit in." No single group of individuals—professionals or parents—has all the answers. Cooperation is necessary if solutions to children's behavior and learning difficulties are to be found.

Many school systems throughout the country are now setting up their own interdisciplinary facilities for children who do not fit into standard learning environments. The success and funding stability of these facilities will depend heavily on community support, and on parents' understanding of the new role that family physicians are attempting to play in dealing with broader definitions of children's health.

THE DOCTOR-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP

By now it should be clear that I believe improving the health of children is more dependent on the resources of parents and society than on those of medicine. The trends that have been stressed reflect my belief that physicians who serve children can and should broaden their areas of responsibility, while at the same time they uphold parental responsibilities and values.

In the pediatric medicine of the future, the interaction of physicians and parents—each respecting the other's rights and judgments—will assume special importance, particularly as a training ground for ridding children of inappropriate and unnecessarily dependent behavior. Let me focus for a moment on this neglected subject.

Ideally, contact with a physician should serve to emphasize preventive and educational goals, and strengthen the confidence of both parents and children in their ability to make intelligent decisions concerning their health.

An episode of illness is an intense experience at both the intellectual and emotional level. Particularly with young children—who constantly though quietly deal with issues of self-worth and dependency as they approach the rigors of adolescence—an illness can be a trying event.

Consequently, when a child is ill a critical moment suddenly becomes available during which parents have an opportunity to provide the youngster with a model for dealing with a physician.

Parents should encourage the child to explain his view of the illness and to talk directly with the physician. Some physicians may need to be coaxed to talk directly to the child.

During examinations children must hear their parents ask questions about diagnosis and treatment. They should be encouraged to ask questions of their own.

Furthermore, parents should not hesitate to reveal their own opinions out of concern that they will conflict with those of the physician. Instead, parents and schools ought to teach children to take responsibility for their own health.

I feel strongly that the childlike acquiescence and passivity some adults show with physicians is not what their children should learn. The cliché "You're the doctor" has outlived its usefulness. The so-called "good patient" is probably not doing himself or his children any good.

The years ahead will no doubt be filled with technological advances fraught with important consequences for health care. As the times change, so must the roles we define for ourselves and for our physicians.

Parents must remember that the awesome responsibilities of parenthood are unlikely to be eased by social change in the future. Families, physicians, and schools must move on in a variety of directions to improve the state of children's health, and to make even more impressive gains than have been recorded in recent decades. Children will profit from these gains to the degree their parents prepare them to accept the changes in medicine they will see in their lifetimes.

Dr. Michael Posner, a pediatrician who received his M.D. from Harvard Medical School, is at present practicing in a consumer-run community health center. Dr. Posner has served as assistant professor in the Department of Pediatrics of the University of Chicago Medical School and has worked on New Mexico Indian reservations as a member of the Public Health Service.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1 What are the sources of preventive health information in your community? Do your schools take advantage of these resources in planning health education programs?
2 What indexes of health/illness would be of most use in monitoring the effectiveness of preventive health measures for school-age children in your community? Do you know how your community compares with neighboring cities, counties, or states?
3 Does the content of school lunches in your school system teach your children what you want them to learn about good nutrition?
4 How can educators advance the cause of preventive health among ethnically and racially diverse children without threatening their cultural individuality?
5 In the management of learning and behavior problems in a school system, are there inherent conflicts of interest between the family's right to privacy and the growing role of "experts"?
6 How should and can our society respond when parents do not seem to perform their responsibilities in the best interests of their children—for instance, in regard to the use of seat belts?

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Children and Values: A Guide for Parents and Teachers

By Alan L. Lockwood, Ed.D.

"Kids are confused; they need values education."
"Values education belongs in the home and church, not in the public schools."
"Crime in the streets, vandalism, public corruption. The schools must engage in values education."
"Values education allows teachers to indoctrinate students."
"Values education infringes on students' and their parents' rights to privacy."
"No one can prove that some values are better than other values."
"In a democracy, public schools must teach democratic values."

Statements such as these are likely to be heard whenever the topic of values education is raised. The statements show that values education is a controversial subject guaranteed to provoke fiery debate. The statements, however, fail to show that current scholarly interest in values education consists of markedly different ideas about what values education actually means.

This brochure describes briefly the key features of some current approaches to values education so that parents can understand better the differences among them. The information provided should also help parents determine whether to support or oppose certain approaches, either in the home or in the school.

What Values Education Means

Values education means different things to different people. It does not refer to any universally agreed-upon set of goals or methods. For some scholars, it refers to the values that schools communicate indirectly to students as a result of the routines and rules of schooling (the so-called "hidden curriculum").

For others, values education refers to practices and materials that deal directly, in some way, with value issues. Persons who speak from this point of view refer to *intentional* values education. In this brochure *intentional* values education will be emphasized because it is likely to be of most interest and concern to parents.

INTENTIONAL VALUES EDUCATION

There are many, often contradictory approaches to intentional values education. Obviously, all of them cannot be discussed in this brochure. Among the three that will be discussed are: *inculcation*, because it is the approach many people automatically associate with values education and because it provides an opportunity to discuss the problem of indoctrination; and *values clarification* and *moral development*, because these are the two approaches most widely discussed today by philosophers, psychologists, and experts in educational curriculum.

Inculcation

The inculcation approach is designed to persuade children to hold particular beliefs or to behave in particular ways. The goals may differ from curriculum to curriculum, but it is usually assumed that children do not already hold the beliefs or engage in the behavior that is to be inculcated or taught.

There are a variety of ways "inculcators" try to make their points. One method is to provide examples of "proper" value beliefs or behavior.

For example, children might read a story in which a boy steals something and later presents it to his girl friend as a gift. Soon his theft is discovered and his girl friend rejects the gift – and him. In discussing the story, the teacher may stress certain conclusions; among these may be "in the long run cheating doesn't pay," or "you shouldn't steal even if it is for another's benefit."

Inculcators also employ a version of role-playing to emphasize certain points.

For example, students might read an unfinished story in which a camp counselor makes a rule that his campers stay together during a cave exploration. Two boys split from the group when they see pretty rocks at the bottom of a pool. While diving to retrieve the rocks, they almost drown. Soon after, another camper comes by and – wishing to get some rocks for herself – prepares to dive. The boys tell her not to, but she says that she has a right to get some rocks, too.

Some students are chosen to play the roles of the campers, and they act out ways of dealing with the problems presented. After the students have created different endings for the story, the teacher leads a discussion stressing the importance of obeying rules and being responsible for others.

The teacher might also indicate that some of the students' endings for the story were better than others in terms of illustrating the importance of the rule or the responsible treatment of others.

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF INCULCATION

The major problem with inculcation is indoctrination. The problem is not so much *what* is taught as *how* it is taught.

More specifically, the indoctrinator wants only one point of view to be heard and understood. Evidence – or reasons for other points of view – is not fairly presented.

For example, children's abilities to make intelligent decisions are overridden because the children are not permitted to hear all sides of an issue and to weigh the strengths and weaknesses of different arguments.

Instead, indoctrinators usually make their points by excessive lecturing; not allowing objections to their views; and rewarding or praising only those who agree with them.

In addition to the indoctrination issue, there are three other problems with inculcation. First, inculcators often have mistaken ideas about what values children currently hold. Second, inculcators believe that there is just one right answer to every value question. Third, inculcators often teach slogans.

Inculcators frequently believe that children do not already hold certain values. Research on the general value beliefs of children suggests that this view is in error. One study, for example, found that children who cheated expressed as much disapproval of cheating as children who did not cheat.

In their eagerness to teach specific values, inculcators often give the impression that value beliefs are correct because (1) some "authority" says so, or (2) if you don't believe this you will get in trouble, or (3) everyone knows this is right. These are inadequate bases for value beliefs.

For example, simply upholding the values of one authority is inadequate because children will encounter other authorities who disagree. How does one learn to assess the contrasting views of different authorities?

Second, to believe that an action is right simply because it keeps you out of trouble is equivalent to saying: "Do what you want as long as you don't get caught." Is stealing wrong only if the thief is captured?

Finally, to pretend that generally people agree on value issues is a gross distortion of reality. Something isn't right simply because most people feel it is.

Inculcators tend to teach values as slogans or rules for living. This practice ignores the complexity of most value decisions.

For example, suppose that children have learned they should be both honest and kind. Does this mean that, having been served a particularly distasteful vegetable by a doting aunt, a child should compliment her (kind but dishonest) or say he doesn't like it (honest but unkind)? Perhaps the inculcator would respond by teaching a rule: always choose kindness before honesty.

However, suppose a boy sees his best friend steal something from a store. Later a policeman asks the boy if he saw who stole the object. Should the boy say yes (honest but unkind) or no (kind but dishonest)? Again, an inculcator may create a rule for such situations. At the same time, however, we can continue to imagine a multitude of situations in which general values or rules either conflict or yield no easy answers.

The inculcators' belief that they have the right answers is both arrogant and misguided. But even if an inculcator claimed to have the right answers, the notion that he could inculcate the list of rules is as foolhardy as imagining one could memorize all the laws passed by Congress.

There is, however, one advantage to the inculcation approach. It is that it helps children become aware that they often must make value decisions. This single advantage, however, does not outweigh the disadvantages of the approach. The problems associated with inculcation lead one to conclude that it is both ineffective and indefensible as an approach to values education in the public schools.

Values Clarification

Unlike inculcation, values clarification does not attempt to convince children to hold particular value beliefs. Instead, the leading advocates of this approach try to teach a method for dealing with value questions, so that children will think more clearly about their value beliefs and become more consistent in their behavior. Those who hold with the values clarification approach believe that if persons begin to think more clearly about what they feel is worthwhile, and if they begin to behave in ways consistent with what they feel is worthwhile, they will lead happier, more satisfying lives.

Like many parents and professional educators, values clarificationists see children as confused and uncertain about their values. From such sources as peers, parents, the media, and elsewhere, children hear different, often conflicting, ideas about what is good and bad, what is right and wrong.

The process of clarifying and obtaining values is intended to reduce the negative effects of values confusion.

Values clarificationists believe that while people have many attitudes and opinions, few of them count as values. In order for something to qualify as a "value," it must meet seven standards or criteria. The value must be:

1 chosen freely
2 from among options
3 after thoughtful consideration of the consequences of each option.

The value must also be a choice:

4 that one is proud of and happy with,
5 and willing to express in public.

In addition, the value must be:

6 acted upon,
7 and acted upon regularly.

Only when a choice meets these seven criteria is it considered to be a value for the person.

The method used to help children obtain values is generally and rather aptly called the "clarifying process." Through this process children make choices with which they feel pleased; openly express their feelings; and indicate how they have acted – or plan to act – according to their value choices. The same process encourages children to listen to their peers and to help them – their peers – understand themselves better.

Clarifying activities, called "strategies," are designed for classroom use. In general, the strategies are based on one or more of the seven criteria by which a value is judged.

For example, the strategy called "Values Voting" is related to public expression (criterion # 5). It is a straw poll in which children indicate yes, no, or abstention on a wide range of value questions. For instance, the teacher might ask: "How many of you ...

- ... enjoy going to church?"
- ... think students are losing respect for teachers?"
- ... think capital punishment should be abolished?"
- ... like chocolate ice cream?"
- ... have no father at home?"

After the poll the children might discuss one or more of the value topics and clarify their views with each other.

Another strategy is related to criterion # 4, being "proud and happy" with a choice. In this strategy, called the "Proud Whip," the teacher moves from child to child asking for quick answers to such questions as:

- What is something about your parents of which you are proud?
- What is something you do with friends of which you are proud?
- What is something you can do by yourself of which you are proud?

Values clarification uses many different strategies dealing with many different value issues. To a large extent its goal is directed at how children feel about themselves. The goal is sometimes described as helping children become positive, purposeful, enthusiastic, and proud.

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF VALUES CLARIFICATION

Values clarification is probably the best known and most widely used of the current approaches to values education. Nonetheless, a number of problems surround it, three of which stand out: Some of the practices threaten privacy rights. It appears to promote ethical relativism as its moral point of view. It does not treat moral value questions as different from other value questions.

One definition of the right to privacy is that people have the right to *control* the flow of information about themselves. They can choose to let others know much or little about themselves. Privacy rights are violated when others obtain information about peo-

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ple without obtaining their permission in advance.

Certain strategies in values clarification ask children to reveal information about themselves and their families. In the following exercises, for example, children are asked to complete sentences in their own words: "Secretly I wish . . .," "My parents are usually . . .," "I cry when . . .," "I'd like to tell my best friend . . .," "The subject I would be most reluctant to discuss here is . . . ."

Sometimes direct questions are asked: "What does your mother do?" "Does she like it?" "Reveal who in your family brings you the greatest sadness, and why." "How did you first learn to kiss?" "Did you ever cheat on tests?" "How many of you are in love right now?"

In its eagerness to help children understand their likes and dislikes, values clarification too frequently infringes on privacy rights. If parents and children give their advance consent that such information be revealed, it would be difficult to say that privacy rights were seriously threatened. (Of course, there is a question of when children are capable of giving informed consent.) Teachers, however, rarely obtain informed consent prior to the use of values clarification. Therefore, strategies like those mentioned in this brochure may fairly be seen as threats to the privacy rights of children and their families.

Public school personnel should be especially sensitive about privacy rights because: children are legally required to attend school; teachers have substantial power to affect children's lives; and information revealed in classrooms is given in the presence of others.

Under these conditions of compulsion, control, and publicity, it is difficult for children to withhold information when it is requested.

Another problem with values clarification is its apparent ethical relativism. Simply put, ethical relativism is the idea that because one value belief cannot be proved better than another, all value briefs are equally good. Values clarification does not intentionally teach this idea, but it is the point of view most likely to be taught.

Children are not encouraged to debate the rightness or wrongness of their value beliefs or the beliefs of others. The seven-step clarifying process does not ask that value beliefs be defended, only that they be chosen in certain ways, prized, and acted upon.

The values clarification approach thus seems to suggest that an almost limitless variety of beliefs is acceptable. For example, such diverse persons as Charles Manson, Adolf Hitler, Bonnie and Clyde, Joan of Arc, Jesus Christ, Albert Schweitzer, and Martin Luther King can all be seen as satisfying the goals of values clarification: They made choices they believed in, publicly expressed their views, and acted upon them.

Values clarification does not intend to teach any specific value beliefs, but, by avoiding debate about rightness and wrongness, it gives the impression that any moral point of view is acceptable.

The final problem with values clarification is that it treats all value issues the same way. The same clarifying method is applied to *moral value decisions* (those affecting the rights and welfare of others) and *nonmoral value decisions* (those dealing with personal preferences in entertainment, careers, food, and so on). For example, in the "Values Voting" strategy, children may be asked if they oppose capital punishment and if they like chocolate ice cream.

Failing to separate moral value issues from nonmoral value issues is a serious fault. Surely a decision to support capital punishment should not be made in the same way—or regarded as of equal importance—as a decision to order chocolate ice cream.

Some serious shortcomings in the values clarification approach have been discussed here. Nevertheless, it does have certain advantages over inculcation.

For one thing, values clarification allows many points of view to be expressed; does not try to teach a set of specific value beliefs; and therefore cannot be accused of indoctrination. Second, it encourages teachers to listen with understanding to children's concerns and so does not assume that teachers have the right answers to all value questions. And third, it presents many clear, thought-provoking strategies that are important in the lives of children.

At the same time, two modifications would probably increase significantly the acceptability of the values clarification approach:

- Those strategies that threaten privacy rights should be eliminated, or parents and children should be given the opportunity to offer prior informed consent for their usage.
- Only nonmoral value issues should be used, or students should also participate in a moral education program in which they have the opportunity to discuss and debate moral issues.

Moral Development

One type of values education is moral education. Currently the most widely discussed method of moral education is the moral development approach, most commonly associated with the work of Harvard University psychologist-philosopher Lawrence Kohlberg.

The major purpose of this approach is to help students develop clear, coherent, and defensible reasons for use in making moral value decisions. Because the focus is on reasoning, "moral developers" are less interested in *what* children think is right than in *why* they think something is right—or wrong.

The approach is based on two general beliefs. The first is that as people grow from childhood to adulthood their moral reasoning proceeds through a series of stages. The second assumption is that the later, or higher, stages of reasoning are to be preferred over the earlier, or lower, stages because they provide better ways of reasoning about moral value issues.

The stages, six of which have been identified, are like separate "moral philosophies" for determining right and wrong. Briefly they may be described as follows:

STAGE ONE (approximately ages 4-8): Concern with *punishment and obedience*. Rightness and wrongness are determined by what powerful people say or by the likelihood of punishment following an action. The judgments of persons with power or prestige tend automatically to be seen as right. Actions that are immediately followed by punishment tend automatically to be seen as wrong. For example, "He shouldn't do that, his mother will spank him."

STAGE TWO (approximately ages 8-12): Concern with *self-interest*. Rightness and wrongness are determined by whether a person gets what he or she wants. Something is right if it is personally useful; wrong if it deprives one of what is wanted. Proper treatment of others is seen as an exchange of favors. For example, "If I help him, what will I get out of it?"

STAGE THREE (begins to emerge around age 12): Concern with *meeting others' expectations*. What is right or wrong is what conforms to the commonly accepted ideas of one's family or social group—or what conforms to general ideas of what "nice" people do or do not do. Judgments are often based on an assessment of intentions. For example, "Don't blame her; she wasn't trying to hurt you."

STAGE FOUR (begins to emerge around age 16): Concern with *maintaining social order*. What is right is what conforms to the rules of the social order as expressed in laws and other formal statements. Correct behavior is that which fulfills duties determined by one's place in the social system. Law and order are seen as good in themselves, and behavior is judged as to whether it preserves or disturbs the existing social order.

STAGE FIVE (emerges around age 20, if at all): Concern with *persons' rights*. Right actions are those which respect the rights of

persons. There is an emphasis on living up to agreements that have been fairly arrived at. This stage reflects the "official morality" that lies behind the Constitution. That is, the government is seen as having an agreed-upon responsibility to preserve and protect the rights of citizens.

STAGE SIX (emerges during the 20s, if at all): Concern with *universal principles*. What is right is determined by the application of principles of justice generally defined as respect for the dignity and worth of individuals. Stress is on treating people equally and fairly as ends in themselves rather than as objects to be manipulated for another's gain. The Golden Rule idea of treating others as you would have them treat you influences thinking at this stage.

Kohlberg's research has found that people develop through these stages in the order listed, and they do not "skip" stages. Only about 20 percent of our population attain the highest stages, it is believed.

Although most Americans reason at Stages Three or Four, the advocates of moral development believe that the highest stages of reasoning provide a better basis for making moral judgments. They offer two major arguments for this belief.

First, they point out that certain majority opinions (frequently held by individuals who have reached Stages Three and Four) are not enough to make something right or wrong. For example, there have been times—in various eras and various societies—when the majority believed the enslavement of human beings was morally acceptable.

The second reason for preferring the higher stages is that they best represent the ethics of our constitutional democracy—that is, the idea that the purpose of government is to promote and protect the rights of citizens. The full meaning of this idea is best understood by those capable of reasoning at the highest stages.

Helping students develop their moral reasoning until it reaches the higher stages is therefore viewed as a desirable objective for citizenship education. But such development takes time; in fact, it is a long process.

Development of this kind—moving from one stage to the next—requires that persons have experiences and opportunities which will permit them to discuss and defend their ideas of right and wrong. In this way children will see for themselves that the higher stages provide better solutions to problems.

For example, two equally strong boys, both reasoning at the self-interest plateau of Stage Two, may want a last piece of cake. Because they are equally strong, they may see that the decision over who should get the cake, or how much each should get, cannot be made adequately on the basis of physical strength. At this point, Stage Three considerations of etiquette (such as "It's nice to share") may be seen as providing a better solution.

Where the moral development approach is practiced, the major activity is the discussion of moral dilemmas. Moral dilemmas are stories, true or fictional, in which basic moral values conflict and create a problem for the characters.

For example, in the "Heinz" dilemma the values of law, life, and property are involved.

A woman was near death from cancer. One drug that might save her had been discovered by a druggist in the town. The druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make.

Heinz, the woman's husband, could not afford to buy the drug and could not get money anywhere else. The druggist would not sell for less, saying it was his drug because he discovered it and he could do what he wished with it.

Heinz became desperate and broke into the store and stole the drug.

After hearing the story, children answer questions and try to explain and defend the reasons for their answers. Questions like the following may be asked:

Was it right for Heinz to steal the drug? Why or why not?

Was it right for the druggist to charge that much? Why or why not?

Another dilemma, "What Do You Do About Rules," is recommended for use with elementary school children. A short filmstrip story is presented in which a superhero, Cheetah the Catman, is involved.

Cheetah has promised his fellow catpeople never to reveal his true identity to anyone, including his family. (When not fighting crime, Cheetah is Sam Wilson, a husband, father, and schoolteacher.)

One night, after foiling a robbery, Cheetah, now dressed as Sam, is spotted by his son, Marcus, as he leaves the bank by a rear window. Marcus is stunned by the thought that his father is a robber. He directly asks his father what he was doing in the bank.

The dilemma presents a conflict between keeping a promise (Sam's oath to the catpeople) and telling the truth (honestly answering his son's question). Children are asked what they think Sam should do, and why:

Susie: I think he should tell Marcus the truth.

Teacher: Why?

Susie: Because otherwise Marcus won't respect his father.

Johnny: I think he should keep the promise.

Teacher: Why?

Johnny: Because he will be able to keep fighting crime, and we need to get rid of crime.

Louise: He should keep his promise because the catpeople might hurt him if they found out he broke his word.

Susie: That's not a good enough reason. He has an obligation to be a good father. That's more important.

Teacher: Johnny, how would you respond to Susie?

Johnny: I'm not sure. But what would happen if everyone decided their personal lives were more important than helping society?

There is no effort to get the children to agree on what Sam should do. The point is to help them clarify their reasoning, to hear other points of view, and to discuss their reasons with each other.

The advocates of the moral development approach believe that if children are given the opportunity to discuss and debate moral issues periodically throughout their school years, they will attain higher stages of reasoning. As a result, they will be better able to deal with the complex value issues they face as citizens and will be more likely to make decisions that respect the rights of others.

A CRITICAL VIEW OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Although the moral development approach is not widely used, it has certain advantages over the other two approaches earlier considered. It does not intend to impose a specific set of value conclusions; it does not ask children to reveal information about themselves or their families; it does not avoid debate about rightness and wrongness; and it does not mix nonmoral value issues with moral value issues.

Nonetheless, the approach does have certain problems, two of which stand out. One is its current lack of clear, easily applied strategies; the other, its limited objective of raising stages of moral reasoning.

The moral development approach did not grow out of extensive experience with children. Its source may be found in the research of developmental psychologists and the theories of philosophers of ethics. As a result, there is not an extensive or "official" set of procedures and activities for parents or teachers to use or apply.

The second problem is the focus of the approach on reasoning. Moral decision-making requires more than the establishment of defensible principles. Children must learn to deal with other issues as well, for example: What would be the effects of different decisions? How do we decide which effects are good? How do we define the value of life,

property, truth, etc.? How do we know when we are faced with a moral as opposed to a nonmoral value decision?

The advocates of moral development would agree that these are good questions, but their approach, as currently formulated, provides little help in answering them.

The focus on moral reasoning alone is dissatisfying in another way. Development is a long-term goal; progress is difficult to see except, perhaps, by highly trained scholars. Therefore it is difficult for parents, teachers, and students to achieve a sense of accomplishment.

Although there are problems with the moral development approach, it is, for a number of reasons, the most promising of the three approaches discussed. It avoids several problems that plague the other approaches, and, more positively, its goal is both defensible and desirable for public schools. Certainly it is in the public interest for citizens to understand the ethical values basic to a democratic society and to try to apply these values in moral decision-making.

Some Final Comments

Some readers may be disappointed to see no mention of sex or religion in a brochure devoted to values and moral education. For some reason many people think that values or moral education necessarily means dealing with sex or religion. This is not the case.

Simply because no ideal or unquestionable approach is available does not mean that schools should avoid engaging in intentional values education. On the contrary: Values teaching is inevitable, even if it is unintentional.

The question is not whether schools should engage in values education but, rather, what types of values education should be pursued. The most defensible approaches to values education in public schools are those consistent with principles of democracy – those that recognize the rights, worth, and dignity of human beings. Approaches to values education based on these principles should not only be permitted in public schools – they should be actively supported.

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1 As indicated in the brochure, scholars have many different conceptions of what values education is. When you first heard the phrase "values education," what did you think it meant?

2 Should some form of values education be part of your school's curriculum? Why or why not? Of the three approaches discussed in the brochure, which (if any) do you feel are acceptable for your school?

3 Do you agree with the author that values education, based on democratic principles, should go on in public schools? What do you believe are basic democratic principles? In what ways are such principles presently incorporated in your school's curriculum?

4 Do you agree or disagree with the author that inculcation is unacceptable in public schools? Is inculcation more acceptable for treating value questions in the family? Why or why not?

5 Values clarification seems more directed at promoting healthy psychological growth among children, whereas moral development seems more directed at promoting goals of good citizenship. If you could choose to pursue only one of these goals, which one would it be?

6 What types of value questions most often arise in your family? Should the school also have a role in dealing with these value questions?

Additional Readings

General Writings on Values Education

Goldbecker, S. *Values Teaching.* Washington: National Education Association, 1976.
A short but useful booklet which presents pros and cons of the values clarification and moral development approaches as well as more general ideas regarding the role of teachers.

Hall, R., and Davis, J. *Moral Education in Theory and Practice.* Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1975.
A presentation of various aspects of moral education. The authors discuss both psychology and ethical philosophy as they apply to a broad view of moral education. There are sections on indoctrination and the role of moral principles in decision-making.

Overly, N., ed. *The Unstudied Curriculum: Its Impact on Children.* Washington: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1970.
A collection of articles dealing with values education from the hidden curriculum perspective.

Purpel, D., and Ryan, K., eds. *Moral Education ... It Comes with the Territory.* Berkeley: McCutchan, 1976.
A collection of articles dealing with a variety of issues and approaches to values education.

Shaver, J., and Strong, W. *Facing Value Decisions: Rationale-Building for Teachers.* Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1976.
A clear discussion of different types of values (moral, nonmoral, etc.) and a presentation of the role of values education based on principles of democracy.

Superka, D., and others. *Values Education Sourcebook.* Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Education Consortium, Inc., 1976.
A description of six different approaches to values education (including values clarification and moral development) and reviews of the many curriculum materials available that represent each approach.

Writings on Values Clarification

Kirschenbaum, H., and Simon, S. *Readings in Values Clarification.* Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1974.
A collection of articles elaborating on the values clarification approach.

Raths, L.; Harmin, M.; and Simon, S. *Values and Teaching.* Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1966.
The original book that set out the theory and practice of values clarification.

Simon, S., and Clark, J. *More Values Clarification.* San Diego: Pennant Press, 1975.
A presentation of specific classroom strategies, including some that emphasize self-disclosure.

Simon, S.; Howe, L.; and Kirschenbaum, H. *Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students.* New York: Hart, 1972.
A description of 79 specific classroom strategies.

Writings on Moral Development

Galbraith, R., and Jones, T. *Moral Reasoning: A Teaching Handbook for Adapting Kohlberg to the Classroom.* Anoka, Minn.: Greenhaven Press, Inc., 1976.
The most systematic presentation now available for how moral dilemmas should be treated in classrooms.

Kohlberg, L. *Collected Papers on Moral Development and Moral Education,* Vols. I and II. Cambridge, Mass.: Center for Moral Education, Harvard University, 1973 (Vol. I), and 1975 (Vol. II).
A collection of articles dealing with the Kohlberg theory and its role in moral development education. In particular see the article by Kohlberg and Turiel in Volume I.

Lockwood, A. *Moral Reasoning: The Value of Life.* Middletown, Conn.: Xerox Education Publications, 1972.
A collection of dilemmas focusing on conflicts involving the value of life.

Selman, R., and Kohlberg, L. (consultants). *First Things: Values,* and *First Things: Social Reasoning.* Pleasantville, N.Y.: Guidance Associates, 1972 and 1975.
A series of filmstrips with sound that present moral dilemmas for elementary school classroom discussions. Dilemmas in the same format are also available for middle and high school age students.

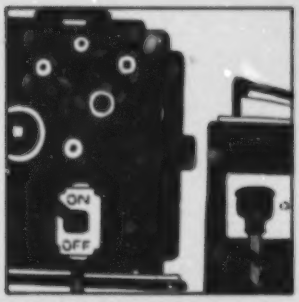
Additional Resources

National Humanistic Education Center, Springfield Road, Upper Jay, New York 12987. Telephone (518) 946-2206.
This center can provide further information about values clarification as well as information about consultants and workshops.

Center for Moral Education, Larsen Hall, Appian Way, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138. Telephone (617) 495-3546.

Social Studies Curriculum Center, Porter Hall 233, Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15213. Telephone (412) 621-2600, ext. 571.
Both of these centers can provide further information about the moral development approach as well as information about consultants and workshops.

Developing the Mind of the Child



By K. Alison Clarke-Stewart, Ph.D.

The dictionary tells us simply that "cognition" is "the process of knowing." In fact, it is the process that most clearly distinguishes human beings from lower animals—enabling us to perceive, to understand, and, ultimately, to control our environment.

Cognition is a process of inestimable importance in our lives. It is responsible, on the most general level, for scientific progress. And, at the level of the individual, it is involved in talking, thinking, and remembering, in reading a book, making a cake, or figuring out an income tax return.

The foundation for these adult activities is established early in childhood. Children explore their environments; they experiment; they imitate; and gradually they learn about the world.

What do they learn? So many, many things: They learn, for example, that physical objects are permanent and exist even when out of sight; that things can be manipulated and used in various specific ways—bouncing, stacking, eating, tearing; that objects can be used as means to desired ends—the stool leads to the cookie jar; that words can stand for objects and actions, and, later, that written signs represent spoken words.

Eventually children learn to read and do mathematical calculations. They begin to imagine and fantasize and use objects as symbols in their play—pretending that a leaf is a cup as they "feed" a doll from it.

All these experiences are part of the cognitive process. And as children continue to explore and experiment, to imitate and pretend, they gain more and more information about the world. As a result, their original notions become more sophisticated. They find out that the wind blows the clouds and that the moon is not made of green cheese. And so their knowledge grows—and we speak of that growth as cognitive development.

The purpose of this brochure is to discuss how you, as parents, can foster the development of cognitive ability and knowledge in your children, so that they will enjoy richer intellectual lives.

We can offer, however, no simple formula to follow, no recipe that will make your children smarter, more thoughtful, or more successful. We can only present some ideas for you to consider, ideas that are by and large, the result of the psychological research that has been done in the area of child development.

It is important for you to understand the limitations of this source of information, to know what advice *cannot* be inferred from scientific research as well as what can. For despite the assurances of the "experts," many aspects of the process of cognitive development—and particularly of the impact of parents on that development—are still shrouded in mystery or controversy.

Is There a Science of Child Development?

Over the past three decades many families and children have been surveyed, interviewed, observed, probed, questioned, and tested, in the interest of science. Nonetheless, the research perspective has serious shortcomings as a basis for deciding how to rear children.

For example, the data that psychological researchers gather about children's development and family relations is merely descriptive. It does not tell us how parents *should* rear their children, but only how (some) parents *do* rear their children. Psychological research does not give clear answers, and psychological researchers often disagree.

One basic controversy among researchers revolves around the distinction between "nature" and "nurture" and their relative effects on children's development. This is not a new issue, but it is still a lively one—one which, it seems, every generation of psychological researchers must reconsider.

The question has been asked most frequently about intelligence; that is, is a person's intelligence determined by his inherited "nature" or by the "nurture" provided by his environment?

In America for many years the popular assumption was that intelligence is inherited, and therefore not capable of being changed. This theory was supported by research studies showing that the IQ scores of identical twins, having identical "natures," were remarkably similar compared to those of fraternal twins or siblings having, presumably, identical "nurture."

In the 1940s and 1950s, however, a number of experimental studies successfully demonstrated that positive intervention in the early environments of infants or young animals could significantly enhance their subsequent development. One study of young babies in an orphanage, for example, showed that putting colorful, stimulating objects on the sides of the infants' cribs dramatically accelerated development of the infants' ability to reach for visual objects.

The pure "nature" position suggests that since intelligence is genetically determined environment is not important. This can be interpreted to suggest that parents cannot deliberately stimulate their children's intellectual development. Fortunately, there is sufficient evidence to convince us that intelligence and intellectual development are indeed influenced to *some* extent by environment.

The most widely accepted view today is the moderate one that *both* heredity and environment affect children's cognitive development. Now the issue is *how much* is intelligence influenced by heredity and *how much* by environment, and how do these two sources of influence *interact* in determining the course and outcome of children's development.

Infants are born with certain "predispositions" and temperamental characteristics. They may be active or quiet, extremely sensitive to stimulation or difficult to arouse. Their parents react to these characteristics—out of their own temperaments and expectations—and the interaction between the two affects the quality of further interaction and development.

For example, the effect that parents who are themselves quiet and unstimulating will have on a quiet baby will differ from the effect they will have on an active one. The quiet baby may need more stimulation than the quiet parents would normally offer if he is to develop at the same rate as the active infant who demands that the care-givers respond to him all the time.

It is for this reason—that development is the result of a complex interaction between the elements of nature and nurture—that we cannot provide a fail-safe, ideal method for stimulating all children's cognitive development. Rather, we can offer only very general principles that parents must *adapt* on an individual basis in their own unique families.

Another source of controversy in recent psychological research is: How do we assess children's cognitive development? The most familiar and popular tools for measuring intellectual or cognitive growth are IQ and achievement tests.

It is true that these tests measure what children *know*; but they confound that information with other factors—with, for example, how well the child cooperates with the examiner; how comfortable he feels in the test situation; and how much he knows of only very specific kinds of facts.

Furthermore, research studies have shown that children's IQ test scores are affected by the order in which the test questions are presented, by the encouragement given by the tester, and by whether the specific questions asked apply to the child's own experience rather than to that of the average, white, middle-class child.

The point is that test scores are only a rough gauge of children's ability. As such, standardized tests should not be regarded, as they so often are, as the infallible and sacred yardstick of a child's intellectual promise or progress.

Academic achievement and IQ scores are only part of a much broader picture of intellectual competence and development. Cognitive competence can be expressed in a variety of ways—something parents should remember when they are considering ways of promoting their children's cognitive development.

Beyond assuring children's basic knowledge of language and concepts, parents might wish to encourage the kinds of skills that best fit with their own values and goals and with the child's temperament and interests. They might, for example, wish to encourage musical talent, artistic achievement, creative writing, or scientific "messing around."

The problems involved in using intelligence and achievement tests were clearly demonstrated in the controversy surrounding evaluation of "compensatory education" programs for so-called "disadvantaged" children.

Compensatory education programs like "Head Start" (preschool) and "Follow Through" (primary school) were innovations of the 1960s that attempted to compensate for deficits in the home environments of poor and minority children by offering the youngsters additional educational experience before—or in addition to—regular schooling.

Unfortunately, evaluation of these programs most often relied on standardized tests of IQ and achievement—tests which not only used white, middle-class "advantaged" youngsters as criteria by which to establish the standards but which were not constructed to show short-term increases in intellectual ability. When no statistically significant increases in test scores were found, it was popularly reported that the programs in question had failed, even though, as already indicated, the standards used in the preparation of the tests were inappropriate to the purposes for which the tests had been created.

Another potentially misleading conclusion drawn from the supposed failure of these programs was that the age at which the children had entered them (four to five years) was "too late"—that the most important developments of life had already occurred, and, moreover, had occurred at home, and not at school.

As a result of this conclusion, the importance of early parental stimulation has been so forcefully advocated in the past few years that it has diverted attention from later important periods of children's intellectual development. It has also placed undue pressure on parents to stimulate and educate their preschool children, and inflicted guilt and anxiety on parents whose children had already entered school at a "disadvantage."

Writers who hold to this point of view have explicitly suggested that the child's development is all up to the parent; some have even claimed that the children's cognitive development is essentially "over" by two or three years of age. Parents who want to stimulate the cognitive growth of their *school-aged* children will find little help in these popular books—and may even become convinced that their task is hopeless.

When you read one of these "how-to-parent" books, examine the content carefully. When a popular expert says his recommendations are based on research, look for the details of the research studies he is using. If his conclusions do not follow logically and directly from the research findings he cites, discount them. If the research he describes involved only one or a few studies, on only a small number of families, in only one or two places, be cautious—that is not substantial evidence. If details of the research studies are not provided, be skeptical.

Examine the way the book makes you *feel*. If its authoritative pronouncements make you feel guilty or uptight or hopeless, it has already defeated its purpose, which is to help you become a better, more confident parent.

Finally, think about your own child, and if the advice given doesn't fit with your perception of your child's needs and characteristics, forget it.

Don't accept the advice of any "expert" unless you are satisfied that it is, "beyond a reasonable doubt," accurate, appropriate, and applicable.

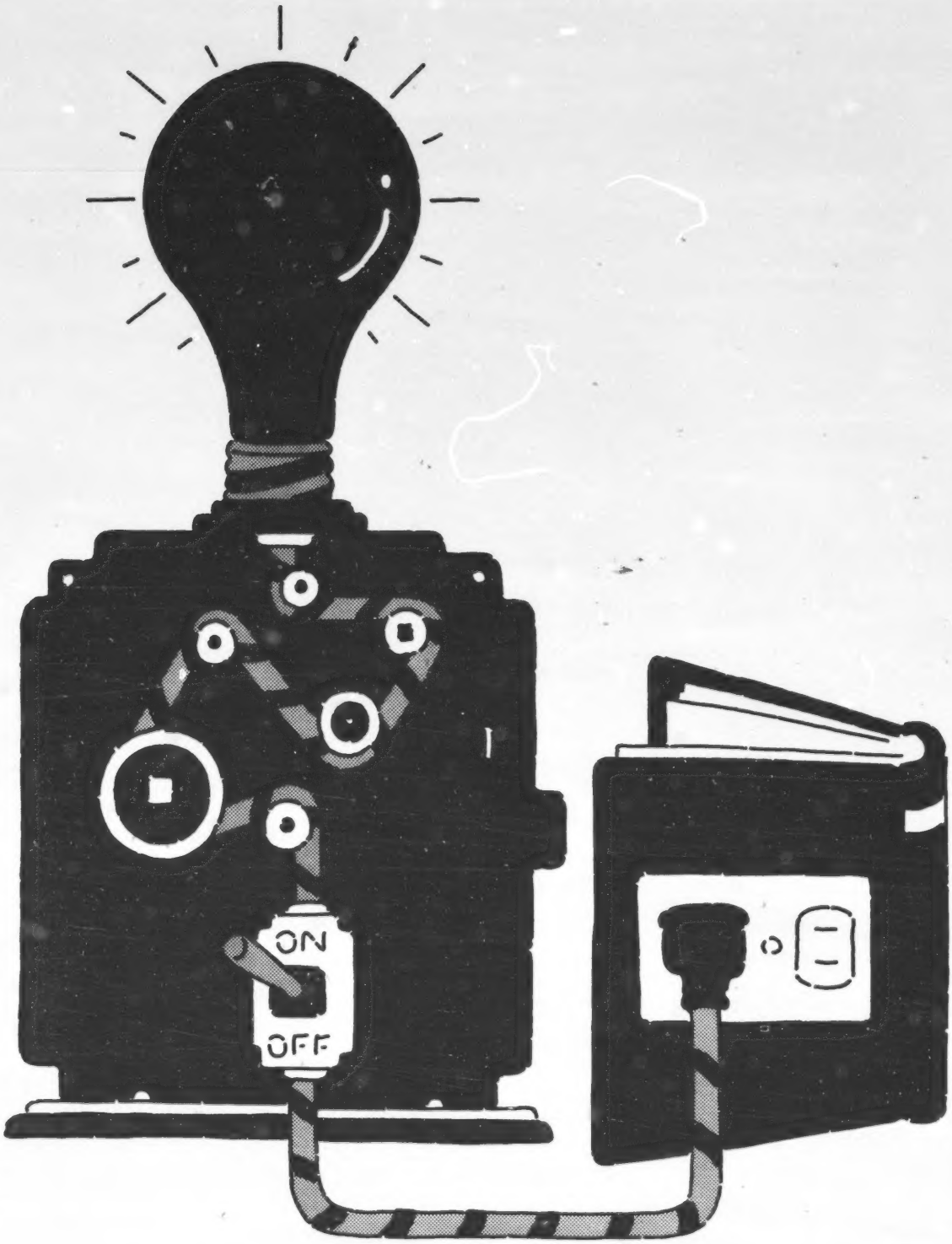
Promoting Cognitive Development: Some Current Concerns

Let us now discuss some specific principles that may be able to guide you in fostering your children's cognitive development. The principles were derived from a large number of research studies in child development, too many to describe here in detail or to mention by name. But remember: Only you can judge whether these principles are indeed helpful, in light of your goals in rearing your child.

Working Moms—or the Case of Quantity Versus Quality of Care

The number of mothers presently employed in full-time positions outside the home is large and increasing. Some experts have deplored this trend, suggesting that children of working mothers suffer untold psychological and intellectual damage. To them, the child of a working mother suffers from maternal deprivation similar to that experienced by orphans in an institution.

In the last few years, however, mothers have become more aggressive and outspoken in defending their right to work. To support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their leaving the home, they have raised the cry that it is not the "quantity" of time the child spends with the mother that is significant, but rather the "quality."

In its most extreme form, this argument says that it doesn't matter whether a mother works, as long as she has a good and stimulating half hour with the child every Sunday afternoon. The issue, of course, is far more complicated than either of these extremes admits.

The first problem lies in popular misconceptions about the "quantity" and "quality" of the interaction between mother and child. As psychological researchers have shown, the amount of time the mother spends at home, available to the child, is not necessarily related to the child's cognitive development. But the amount of time—*i.e.*, "quantity"—the mother spends *interacting* with the child *is* related to his intellectual growth.

All kinds of interaction are not equally "effective," however. To wit: Interaction that is actively stimulating and responsive is "better" (*i.e.*, more highly related to the child's cognitive development) than interaction that is dull, routine, or pitched at an inappropriate level for the child's ability.

It is this discovery in research, presumably, that has led to the aforementioned cry that quality of interaction is what matters, not quantity. It does have a certain ring—and it is not surprising that it has been picked up by day-care advocates and avid working mothers to justify the mother's absence from her children.

What this viewpoint ignores, however, is that when the child is not with the mother, he is still somewhere, involved in some kind of interaction—with a baby-sitter, a father, brother or sister, day-care worker, teacher, friend, TV . . . or no one.

The "quality" of these times matters, too—an issue that is too often ignored in popular and governmental discussion of how to enhance children's intellectual development and at the same time expand career opportunities for women.

A great many research projects have attempted under difficult circumstances to examine what effects a mother's working will have on her children's behavior and development. The result: no consistent differences in the cognitive development of children of working and nonworking mothers have been found.

Research studies have shown that the mother's satisfaction may be more important to her children than whether she has a full-time job or not. Mothers who do not have jobs and are unhappy about it seem to have the most trouble and the least enjoyment with their children. Mothers who work and enjoy it—even though they often feel inadequate or guilty about the quality of their child-rearing—do not, the research studies suggest, hinder their children's intellectual development or achievement in school.

Of course, the age of the child also makes a difference in the effect his mother's working may have. There is a greater danger when the child is under three years that his development may be slowed by his mother's full-time employment. Here, we have been concerned primarily with children between the ages of five and nine years.

We cannot make simple predictions about the consequences of a mother's working on her child's cognitive development because other factors are also involved—such as what the mother's job is; how much she likes it; what the father's attitude is toward her working; and the individual characteristics and vulnerabilities of the child in relation to his age, temperament, and history of development.

TOYS AND TV—THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE HOME: Psychological research suggests that, beyond a certain minimal number, the quantity of toys a child has does not enhance his cognitive development as much as does the *variety* of objects available. A fairly small number of toys and educational materials may be adequate if they are of different kinds and are regularly supplemented by new items.

Toys should provide opportunities for the child to do many different things—build, take apart, put together, pretend, throw, read, cuddle, share with a friend. They should be objects the child can manipulate and control. They should be novel and interesting.

In the early years it is important that the child be encouraged to explore the physical environment alone and also be joined in play by an adult who provides, shows, and demonstrates the toys.

Later, in the preschool and school years, if the child has had such playful interaction earlier, the parent need not take such an active role in the child's play. By then the child should have received sufficient social support for his exploration and play with materials and be eager to continue and develop those interests.

The relative *complexity* of materials is also important. The toys and books selected for the child should be close to the limit of his ability—not so simple as to bore him, nor so difficult as to frustrate him.

The television set is another important component in the environment of the child. Research has shown that children who spend the most time watching TV lag behind their peers intellectually, a finding that has led many people to conclude that television itself is detrimental to the cognitive development of the child.

An equally plausible explanation, however, is that children who watch an excessive amount of TV suffer not because of the *amount* of TV they watch but because they—in their preoccupation with TV—fail to interact to an adequate degree with peers, parents, or manipulable materials. Thus the problem can be interpreted as an educational or social "deficiency" rather than as "damage" induced by an overdose of TV.

As long as children have frequent opportunities for other kinds of intellectually stimulating activity, the *content* of the television viewed is more important than the *amount*.

Some TV programs have been found to enhance children's intellectual development. Cognitively oriented programs like *Sesame Street* and *The Electric Company* can both inform and stimulate children.

The benefits of watching such programs is especially pronounced if the parent watches the program with the child. Children's program preferences closely follow their parents'; thus, mutual involvement in watching a program increases the likelihood that the child will absorb the ideas it presents.

We don't know why this occurs. One possible explanation may be that parents learn from the program what it is appropriate to do with the child—how to teach or play with him—and thereby enrich his other home activities. Or perhaps the parent's involvement makes the program more important in the child's view, so he pays more attention and absorbs more. Or perhaps the parent discusses the content of the program with the child, thereby making it more personal, active, and understandable.

Whatever the reason, these observations suggest that parents should evaluate the content of the programs they and their children watch. They should consider ways of selecting suitable or desirable programs from those available, and ways of urging television networks to show more intellectually stimulating programs for young viewers—especially programs that parents would find palatable, also.

Parental Behavior to Foster Cognitive Development

AFFECTION: Although folk wisdom may suggest that "love is enough" for rearing children, recent psychological research indicates otherwise. While the expression of love and affection to children—especially very young ones—is obviously important, by school age other kinds of parental behavior

are more clearly related to children's intellectual performance.

STIMULATION: Much more important for children's cognitive development is parental behavior that is intellectually stimulating. From the first months of life, stimulation of the infant's senses promotes his overall development. And in the early years, the more the child interacts with an adult the better the child performs cognitively. By the time children are in school, interaction with parents can be less frequent than in the preschool years, and should be supplemented by extensive self-initiated interaction with physical materials.

If your child is not now actively involved in independent intellectual pursuits and is not doing well in school, ask yourself how often you two have playful and intellectually stimulating interactions. If such occasions are rare, look for or create more opportunities for this kind of contact.

Note that we are talking about playing together, not about your instructing or teaching the child. These stimulating interactions might include reading to the child (as opposed to teaching him to read) and just plain social conversation about interesting things. The conversation should be just between the two of you, not with the whole family, and not while your mind is on other things. The child should be encouraged to ask questions, and you should be willing to answer them.

Another kind of interaction might involve outings together to interesting places—a museum, the library, the zoo, the firehouse, a factory, the post office. While children in school may take class field trips to these places with their teacher, doing it with parents can be more stimulating—and fun.

RESPONSIVENESS: The need for responsive parental behavior also starts early. It is important for the infant to learn that the world is in many ways a predictable place, that he can anticipate and to some extent control people and things. It is this knowledge that encourages him to explore new situations and new people and helps to increase his cognitive development.

To help the infant develop this knowledge, it is essential that parents interact frequently with the infant, and do so in response to the infant's signals and demands. The timing and quality of this interaction should not be at the parent's whim, but should mesh with the infant's needs, desires, interests, and schedule. This way the baby learns that when he cries, someone feeds or comforts him; when he smiles, someone smiles back; and when he reaches for a toy that is out of his grasp, someone gives it to him.

The expectation of control that thus develops in the first year of life is a foundation for all subsequent intellectual development. Later, after the child has learned that he can control the environment, it is not necessary that parents respond in the same immediate way.

Once children learn language, their demands can often be postponed to a later time that is more convenient for the parent. But still the notion of responsiveness is an important one. Responding to the child's interests, demands, and questions—eventually if not immediately—is one way of encouraging children to continue to ask questions and explore the world around them.

ACCEPTANCE AND LIMITS: Another strategy for maintaining the child's interest and involvement in exploring and learning about the environment is for parents to accept the child's expressions, experiments, and exploration. A style of parental behavior that is restrictive, intrusive, and demanding can lead to precocious intellectual performance in very young children and to success later in traditional academic tests in school. It does not, however, lead to a higher ultimate level of intelligence.

Nor does strict parental control promote intellectual development, more broadly defined to include the kinds of competence important for success in less traditional and more "open" classes—such as creativity, curiosity, achievement, "drive," or the ability to ignore distraction.

These qualities are fostered by a style that is accepting and supportive of the child's behavior; a style that is positive and encouraging, but does not provide specific direction and suggestions; a style that does not restrict the child's activity but allows the child to develop independence, innovation, and initiative.

Parents are usually interested in more than their children's unrestrained exploration and intellectual flowering, however. Consequently, a delicate balance between parental acceptance and authority must be achieved.

Within a supportive environment, parents must establish reasonable limits on the child's behavior. They should "enforce" these limits through appeals to reason and to the child's feelings rather than through arbitrary rules.

TEACHING AND TUTORING: Formal, structured teaching of very young children became popular with Project Head Start in the 1960s. Soon the same approach appeared in a number of home-based programs which involved active teaching and tutoring of children by parents at home.

During this same period, a number of popular books were published which offered parents do-it-yourself guides for developing early intellectual skills in children. The guides dealt with a variety of subjects, from identifying geometrical shapes to solving problems in advanced algebra. Parents who read these books could hardly escape the conclusion that they would be doing irreparable harm to their children if they failed to tutor them in academic skills.

This conclusion, however, is open to question. While research suggests that it is important for parents to interact with their children frequently in stimulating, responsive, and supportive ways, and to provide them with an interesting and explorable environment, there is no evidence that formal teaching of academic skills by parents is necessary to assure children's future intellectual achievement.

In fact, there is some research which suggests that when parents try to anticipate or duplicate the efforts of the child's schoolteacher, they are not effective and may even be detrimental in furthering the child's intellectual development. Possibly this is because of inconsistencies between the teacher's and the parent's efforts, or maybe it is just a case of "overkill."

If your *only* concern is school performance, home tutoring of your child may help (as long as the content taught at home reinforces rather than contradicts the content taught in school). But other aspects of your behavior are equally important for promoting general intellectual development and for enhancing academic achievement as well.

One valuable strategy is to establish an "intellectual" environment in the home by demonstrating appropriate work habits in your own activities—planning ahead, scheduling activities, setting time aside from family interruptions for your own intellectual pursuits—so that the child can follow and imitate what he sees.

If the child sees you involved in reading and writing and discussing ideas, he is more likely to value and participate in those kinds of activities himself. Being interested in and rewarding his intellectual activities—schoolwork, homework, hobbies, trips—is another way of demonstrating your support.

Ask about school out of interest, not in order to "check up" on or criticize his work. Expect good work, and reward it.

Do not insist on a trip to the museum when the child would rather be out playing. But when the child shows some curiosity about a particular subject displayed at the museum—the Civil War, Pocahontas, Captain Cook, or butterflies—take him to *that* exhibit and answer his questions.

Of course you can help "inspire" the child's initial curiosity, too, by talking or reading about a subject, going to concerts, listening to records, and so on. You need not wait until the child asks. But your teaching should be informal and fun, and, above all, linked to the child's interests and abilities, not to your idea of what he *must* learn.

In this brochure, we have discussed in a general way some "guiding principles" parents can refer to in order to promote their children's cognitive development. Psychological research, as we have pointed out, does not offer strict "rules" for that purpose. Parents' behavior must still evolve according to their particular goals, family circumstances, and the individual characteristics of their children.

To help you evaluate your behavior as a parent in light of the most recent research on children's cognitive development, we offer the following series of questions that you can ask yourself whenever the spirit or the crisis moves you to do so:

When my child asks questions, do I listen, answer, and follow through with related discussion or activities?

Do I make the most of opportunities to encourage the child's particular interests?

Do we share frequent experiences that are intellectually stimulating and also fun?

Is the child's physical environment varied, rich, and interesting?

Do I let him (or her) explore the environment freely (within the bounds, of course, of physical safety)—even though the activity may prove messy or inconvenient?

Do I supervise the television programs he (or she) watches?

When I'm not with him (or her), what is the child doing?

Do I say "no" to the child's requests without thinking about whether I could say "yes"?

Do my own activities set an example for the kind of intellectual activities I expect the child to engage in and enjoy?

Your answers to these questions may prove helpful in that they can tell you more than any expert about your success or failure in promoting the intellectual development of your child.

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1 What are your general goals for your child's cognitive development? How important to you is it that he/she do well in school? Which of his/her talents and abilities do you especially want to promote in the next few years?

2 Have you ever read any popular child-care or "how-to-parent" books? What did you think of them? What did you learn from them? How were they helpful? Not helpful? What was the message of each? What basis did each author have for his advice?

3 What "unique" characteristics did you notice in your child when he/she was born? How did they mesh with your own style and temperament? How are they reflected in the child's present behavior?

4 What do you think of standardized IQ and achievement tests? What do their results mean? How can they be used? Misused? How should the tests be used and by whom?

5 What can you do to ensure that you have "enough" interaction with your child? What do you consider to be "enough"? What kinds of interaction and activities are typical in your family? Are these cognitively stimulating for the child? How could they be made more intellectually valuable?

6 What habits and knowledge have you noticed that your child has learned from watching television? What "rules" about watching TV do you have at your house? Should you exert more control over what your child watches? Why (or why not)? How?

Additional Readings

Bee, Helen. *The Developing Child.* New York: Harper & Row, 1975.
An introduction to the facts, theories, and processes of child development, written in a simple and understandable style for college undergraduates.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie. *Is Early Intervention Effective?* Washington: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Child Development, 1974.
An integrative summary of the results from recent early education and parent education projects, suggesting the potential importance of parents' contribution to their children's education.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie, and Mahoney, Maureen. *Influences on Human Development.* Hinsdale, Ill.: Dryden Press, 1975.
A collection of short, scholarly articles describing individual research studies of the influences on children's development from infancy through adolescence, including such factors as social class, absence of the father, and maternal teaching.

Callahan, Sidney. *Parenting: Principles and Politics of Parenthood.* New York: Doubleday, 1973.
One articulate parent's reaction to the child-care theory and advice offered by how-to-parent books.

Clarke-Stewart, K. Alison. *Child Care in the Family.* New York: Academic Press, 1977.
A simplified overview of research findings describing the family's influence on child development from birth to nine years, and an exploration of the implications of that research for child-care policy.

Deakin, Michael. *The Children on the Hill.* New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972.
A delightful and inspirational account of one family's unique approach to rearing their children.

Dodson, Fitzhugh. *How to Parent.* New York: Signet, 1970.
One of the many popular books available offering parents advice on rearing and teaching their children. Although this book, like most of the others, stops short of the school years, its eclectic ideas may be applicable with older children as well.

Elkind, David. *A Sympathetic Understanding of the Child: Birth to Sixteen.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1974.
A survey of the facts about children's intellectual, emotional, and social development during the school years, written in nontechnical language and in a nontechnical format.

Hartup, Willard, ed. *The Young Child: Reviews of Research.* Vol. 2. Washington: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1972.
"Mini reviews" on a variety of topics in the area of child development, including intelligence, reading, cognitive development, and parent education.

Stone, Joseph, and Church, Joseph. *Childhood and Adolescence: A Psychology of the Growing Person.* 3rd ed. New York: Random House, 1975.
A classic introductory child development textbook that describes in vivid detail the growing child from stage to stage.

White, Burton. *The First Three Years of Life.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975.
A "scientifically based" book for parents of young children, making the point that what parents do for their children in the first three years is more important than what they do later. This is a book on which to practice your critical skills.

Yarrow, Leon; Rubenstein, Judith; and Pedersen, Frank. *Infant and Environment.* New York: Halstead, 1975.
An example of the kind of research psychologists do in order to investigate the impact of home and family on children's intellectual development.

The ABCs of Children's Social Development

By K. Alison Clarke-Stewart, Ph.D.

Children go to school to learn their ABCs. They learn to read them and write them, to put them together into words and sentences and stories. New worlds of thought and achievement are opened to them as they acquire these "building blocks" of intellectual development.

But there is another set of building blocks – another "alphabet" – that is also fundamental for development. These building blocks are the social skills of caring and sharing, giving and helping, conforming and cooperating, being friendly and sensitive and appropriately assertive. These qualities are already developing in children before they go to school, and are more likely to be "taught" by parents and friends than by teachers.

In this brochure some of these building blocks of social development will be discussed in terms of what parents of children in elementary school can do to influence the development of their youngsters.

Research provides only very limited information about the development of social qualities during childhood and about how parents can help to promote this development. Despite this handicap, the information that is currently available from research, coupled with some serious thought by parents, can assist in the process of changing or enhancing the social qualities of children.

A is for AGGRESSION

Aggressive behavior is antisocial, pain-inflecting, disobedient, destructive, hostile, cruel, and often violent. Almost all children exhibit aggressiveness in some form (kicking, pushing, shoving), to some one (younger brother, a pal at school, the defenseless family pet), at some time (when they are thwarted in their attempts to get another cookie, a bicycle, more attention). And most parents would like to control, reduce, or eradicate aggressive behavior.

Some psychological researchers have examined aggressive behavior under controlled conditions in the laboratory, manipulating what the child sees and hears and with whom he plays. They also have studied and compared the home environments of children who behave aggressively with those of children who are "well behaved." The findings of these studies are summarized below.

What individual parents consider an acceptable level of aggressive behavior in their children will vary from family to family – and appropriately so. The emphasis or deemphasis on this social behavior is, within limits, a matter of personal style, circumstances, and preference. Whatever level of aggression is desired, however, the findings of research, in combination with common sense, offer some hints on how to go about reaching that goal.

ATMOSPHERE

The first place to look is at what psychologists term the "affective" atmosphere in the home – the emotional tone of communication in the family. Not surprisingly, researchers have observed that children from families where parents are angry, hostile, dissatisfied, and unaccepting of the child tend to be more aggressive.

BEHAVIOR

Young children try to copy what their parents do. When parents are themselves violent or aggressive – to each other or to the child – the child is likely to become aggressive, too. If parents want their children to react to frustration constructively rather than aggressively, they can demonstrate this kind of behavior in their own responses to frustrating events.

COMMUNICATION

A parent may think he can "wipe out" the effect of the child's imitating his aggressive behavior by reprimanding him every time he tries it, but the parent probably won't have much luck. Children are clearly more impressed by what parents practice than by what they preach.

Verbal disapproval or criticism, by itself, is ineffective in controlling aggressive behavior – and it may even make things worse by increasing the child's anger.

Labeling the child's behavior as "bad" is a necessary step, but it is not sufficient for eliminating the behavior. It is helpful if the parent also explains *why* the behavior is bad by pointing out its (negative) consequences, while at the same time he suggests (positive) options.

Another strategy a parent can use is to try to make the child think positively about his frustration. A child defeated in a hard-fought contest can be told that he is a good sportsman. A child whose brother has borrowed his bike without asking can be told that he is very understanding and generous to share his toys with his brother.

DISCIPLINE

Another way parents often mistakenly think they can stop their children's aggressiveness is by beating it out of them. That won't work, either. By slapping, spanking, or hitting them, parents show children a model of aggression.

Although severe punishment – if it is immediate, consistent, and prolonged – can temporarily inhibit the expression of overt

aggression in some situations, it is not a reliable means of eliminating aggressive behavior. When a child thinks he can get away with it and has an appropriate target and sufficient incentive, he will behave aggressively even though he has been punished before for a similar infraction.

Punishment is especially likely to increase a child's aggressive behavior when it is combined with authoritarian and coercive discipline in a hostile emotional atmosphere. If a child is repeatedly restricted and frustrated in his activity, he becomes angry, and physical punishment provides a model of aggressive behavior for him to imitate.

A child's aggressiveness also increases when discipline is *inconsistent:* when a parent punishes the child for kicking his sister one day but lets him get away with it the next; when one parent is permissive while the other is strict about the same things; or when parents who have been very restrictive and strict in controlling the child's activities up to a certain age (like six or seven years) suddenly become totally permissive.

What seems to work best in reducing aggressive behavior is discipline that is rational and reasonable, firm and consistent, administered in a positive atmosphere, and combined with an explanation the child can accept and understand.

When the child misbehaves, a "time out" period that simply *removes* the child from the situation for a short time and allows him to "cool off" is more effective than physical punishment and does not provide a model for aggression.

It is also possible to train children to respond constructively to frustration by rewarding and encouraging their cooperative or humorous responses to frustrating situations. When younger brother breaks the child's pencil, sharpening it can become a cooperative venture for the pair.

Exposure

Children pick up aggressive habits from sources other than their parents, of course. Violence is all around them—on the playground, the street, the TV screen. The parent concerned about his child's aggressiveness should consider the people and experiences to which the youngster is exposed.

To reduce the likelihood of aggressive outbursts, the parent should lessen the child's encounters with aggression-evoking stimuli—weapons; war toys; bullies; violent movies, stories, and television programs. It is probably not possible, nor advisable, to eliminate exposure to *all* such stimuli, but parents should teach the child how to handle these things in ways they consider appropriate and desirable.

A is also for AUTONOMY

Being assertive, independent, and self-reliant is a value Americans hold dear. It is also a quality most parents desire in their school-aged children. But how to foster qualities of independence is another question. Recent research in children's home environments offers some tentative answers.

Atmosphere

Children who are independent and assertive typically come from warm, affectionate, approving, and harmonious families.

Behavior

In such families, the parents are themselves independent, confident, and assured. They support the child's growing independence—which is a natural development that begins with the determined "NOs" shouted by the "terrible two"-year-old. They don't, however, force the child to act independently, waiting instead for him to show a desire to do so.

Communication

The parents encourage the child, listen to him, and, at least occasionally, are influenced by what he has to say. They let him express independent opinions and treat him as a significant and separate individual.

Discipline

Although they respect the child's freedom and are generally accepting of most of his behavior, the parents exercise firm, consistent, and authoritative control. Their rules and limits and demands are clearly defined and rational. Most important, their restrictions are appropriate for the situation, the age, and the ability of the child. As parents, they demand and reward behavior that is appropriately mature in light of the child's age.

Children who remain dependent and helpless usually come from two kinds of families. Either the parents are so dominating, protective, and restrictive that the child never gets a chance to make his own decisions and develop independence—or they are so permissive, indulgent, and lax that the child never has to do or decide anything for himself but is permitted to go on acting like a baby as long as he likes.

Exposure

If independence is to be developed in children, it is important for them to see enough of their parents. Children who are seldom with their parents may be so eager to see, hold, touch, and talk to them that they will hang onto them whenever they get the chance. When the parents are not there, the children may behave in a similarly "dependent" way with other available adults.

The problem can be particularly acute in single-parent families, in families where both parents work full time outside the home, or in families where the child not only has limited contact with the parents but is placed in a series of changing, substitute-care arrangements. Parents in such families should be especially sensitive to this problem. If the child is more dependent than they like, they should try to spend more time with the child, and offer him opportunities to form close relationships with other adults.

B is for BALANCE

Independence and assertiveness are generally considered desirable, but what is *most* desirable is that such independence be balanced with friendliness, cooperation, and consideration for the feelings and needs of others.

Children should be both independent and sociable, should assert themselves or conform, according to the circumstances of the situation. Finding and promoting this balance in the social behavior of their children is yet another challenge that parents must face.

Atmosphere

Balance can best be sought in a home environment that is positive, supportive, and tolerant.

Behavior

Parents who have been able to realize this balance in their own lives and behavior, and who model and encourage both independent and sociable behavior, are likely to promote a similar balance in their children.

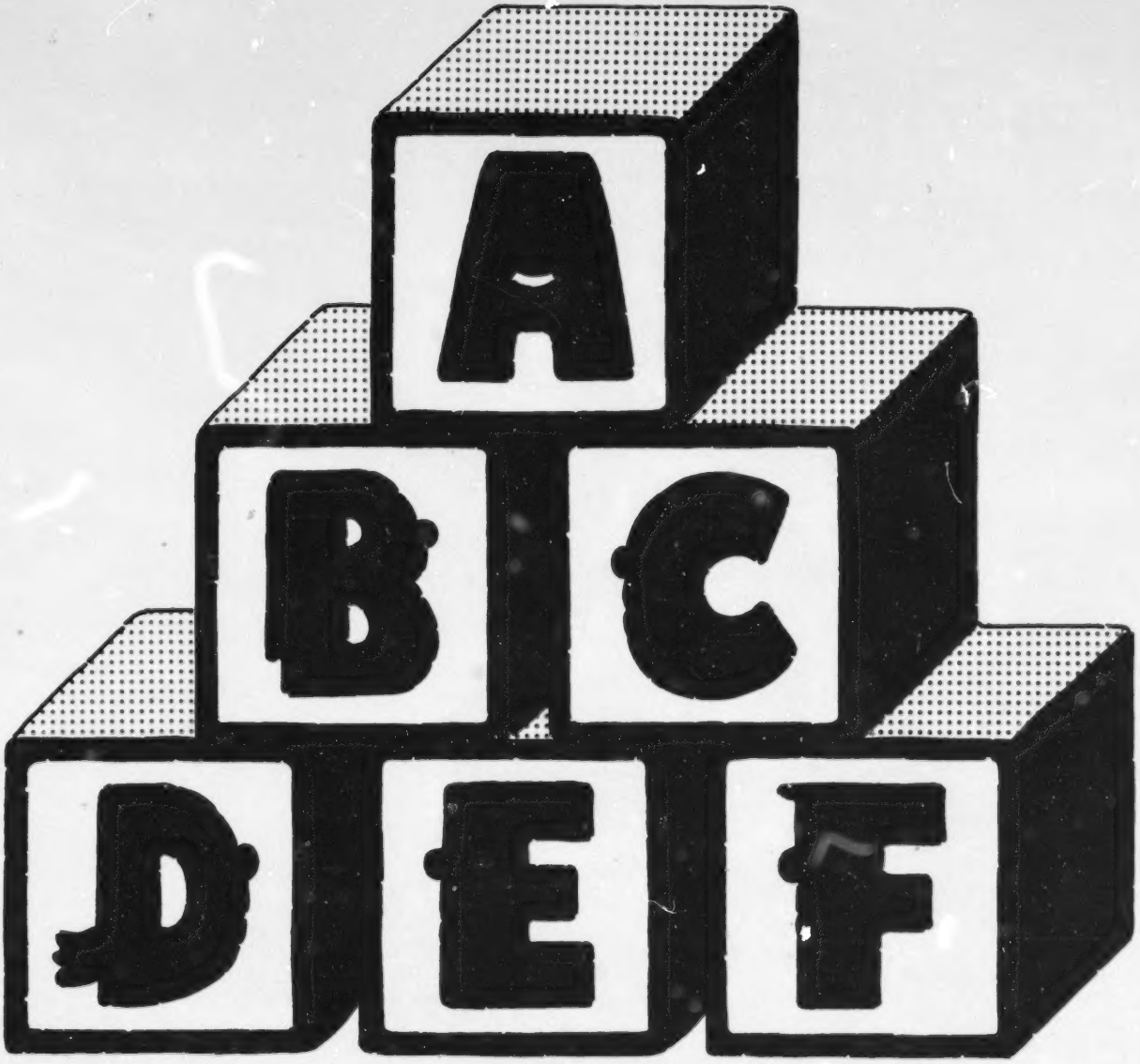
Balance should also be sought between the roles of mother and father. When one parent is overly dominant and assertive and the other submissive and dependent, the child is not likely to see the desirability of combining these traits in his own social interactions, and he will be likely to assume the characteristics of one parent or the other.

Communication

When conflicts between self-interest and social concern, between independence and conformity, arise, family discussions can sensitize children to the issues that are in conflict and can also help them resolve such conflicts in their own lives.

Discipline

In obtaining the desired balance between children's independence and social concern, the method and amount of discipline parents use are also relevant. One rather compre-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hensive study has examined the home backgrounds of children displaying a desirable blend of sociability and independence with their peers at school. This study suggests that the best disciplinary strategy to achieve this result is the *"authoritative"* approach.

This method of discipline strikes a balance between authoritarian discipline – where the rules are many, strict, and harshly enforced – and permissive discipline – where there are no rules at all. "Authoritative" discipline sets definite limits and exerts firm control, but the number of rules is reasonable, and rules are balanced by frequent approval and by acceptance of much of the child's behavior.

EXPOSURE
Although children need to have adult models who demonstrate a workable balance between independence and sociability, they also need to play with their peers in order to learn, firsthand, how to interact with others. If children never have the opportunity to work out the balance between assertiveness ("It's mine!") and sociability and cooperation ("OK, we'll share it") in interactions with other children, it is unlikely that they will achieve such a balance in adolescence or adulthood.

Parents can set a fine example, but children still need to "field test" that example themselves, and this they can do only in free play with their peers. If there is little opportunity for this kind of experience to occur naturally, parents can arrange for it to happen by giving parties; by having the child's friends over to the house; by sending the child to summer camp; and by saying "yes" when Johnny asks if he can go to Jimmy's house to play after school.

C is for COOPERATION ... and COMPETITION
Cooperation and competition are other aspects of social behavior which require just the right touch of balance. Here, again, individual preferences prevail.

In the United States, although cooperation is often advocated for young children, when the child does go to school he inevitably encounters an emphasis on competition and individual achievement – an emphasis that, in time, edges out the previous stress on cooperation. While some degree of competitiveness is necessary for achievement in our society, there are two potentially negative consequences of this emphasis: (1) competition may become an end in itself, and (2) competition may weaken cooperation and compassion for others.

Since it is almost impossible for children to avoid picking up on the spirit of competitiveness that is a part of all aspects of American life – from school to politics – parents concerned about the social goals their children will respond to might consider the value of emphasizing cooperation more at home in order to counteract the training their children will receive outside the home.

ATMOSPHERE
Parents who wish to promote cooperation will endeavor to ensure that the atmosphere within the family is positive, supportive, accepting, and approving (especially of cooperative actions) in response to the children and their activities.

BEHAVIOR
Parents are the models, and children imitate their actions, their style. Following a code of behavior the parents themselves believe in; setting standards for the child that the parents themselves follow; working on tasks cooperatively with the child: activities like these all speak louder than words about the social values parents hold as their own and observant children are quick to adopt.

COMMUNICATION
Although what the parent *does* carries more weight than what he *says*, discussing cooperative activities and the satisfaction they create can remind the child that this kind of behavior is desirable.

The parent's reactions to the child's participation in competitive activities can also indicate the parent's values – as long as the parent believes what he says and practices what he preaches. If a parent boasts about how he destroyed a business competitor – or if he either praises or criticizes the child excessively for winning or losing a race, then the parent quite clearly conveys the message that competition is all-important and victory is what counts.

DISCIPLINE
Deliberately rewarding children's cooperative (or competitive) group activities also encourages cooperative (or competitive) behavior. The parent who seeks to increase the likelihood that children will act cooperatively can help to do so by rewarding the *group* of children rather than a single child. Otherwise, the parent defeats his purpose and, ironically, transforms the act of being cooperative into a competitive achievement.

EXPOSURE
Children also learn social values from television. Violent programs – and cartoons are among the most violent – which demonstrate that aggressive behavior is acceptable can make children more aggressive and less cooperative. In the opposite direction, children who watch programs that stress cooperative and social activities (like *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*) are apt to be more prone to cooperate with both peers and adults.

D is for DEPENDENCY
Discussed under Autonomy

E is for EMPATHY
Knowing and understanding what another person is thinking, feeling, or intending – being "in tune" with that person and sensitive to his needs and desires – is the capacity we call "empathy."

Empathy develops only when the child has reached a certain level of cognitive understanding – a level at which he can put himself in the place of the other person. Once again, we do not know very much about how or at precisely what age this social skill develops. It seems, however, that empathy is more intellectual and verbal than the other social qualities discussed in this brochure, and that consequently *communication*, *discipline*, and *exposure* are more relevant influences than *atmosphere* or *behavior*.

COMMUNICATION
The child needs, first, to learn about emotional cues in people's behavior – what the cues are and what they signify. He needs to learn that when mommy smiles, she is happy; when mommy cries, she is sad.

Learning the language labels of "happy" and "sad" is part of this process. And the child learns these labels by communicating with his parents.

However, if the parents' attempt at communication is one-sided and the child is only asked "How do/would you feel?" – and then only when he has misbehaved – the effectiveness of the lesson is limited.

The parent's communication with the child should also show that the parent is a person with feelings and motives. Parental reactions to the child's behavior can be honest and emotional without being evaluative.

When the child slams the door for the fifteenth time the same morning, for example, the parent might say, "When you do that I get absolutely enraged ..." rather than "You stupid idiot, why do you keep doing that?" This should convince the child that the parent has strong feelings and is not arbitrarily and "objectively" policing the child's activities.

DISCIPLINE
Verbal communication is a valuable asset in

disciplining the child, too. In addition to articulating the rule that is to be enforced, the parent can also explain why he made the rule in terms of the effect of the child's behavior on other people's feelings.

Discipline that focuses on the reason or the intention that is the basis for misbehavior – rather than only on its severity or inconvenience – will help make the child aware of people's feelings and motives. When the child accidentally breaks a plate, for example, the incident should be treated sympathetically, as befits an accident – and not attacked as if it were a crime.

Finally, it is important that the parent react verbally to the child's misbehavior in words that portray how he honestly feels, so that the child will get an accurate sense of how his actions affect other people. It is a disservice to the child, for example, to pretend that his jumping up and down on the new sofa doesn't disturb his parents when in fact it does. The child should be told why the action makes his parents angry, and he should be *stopped* from doing it.

The child need not be whipped, however, in order to understand his parents' anger. Strict, harsh, and punitive discipline inhibits the child from exploring the boundaries of rules. Parents may not enjoy having the limits of their rules tested, but for the child it is a necessary exercise in growing up.

If rules are too strict and punishment too harsh, the child will learn there is safety only within the rules. He will become intolerant of ambiguity and direct his life according to rules, rituals, and stereotypes. This will hinder his development of empathy, as he will settle for conventional and stereotyped interpretations of how others are feeling or what they are thinking.

Exposure

Another way of helping the child develop his capacity for empathy is to ensure that he is exposed to a wide variety of social roles, relations, and situations. If the only people the child interacts with are mommy and daddy and other children, he will not be forced to explore and broaden his perceptions to understand the thoughts and feelings of different sorts of people – waitresses, garage attendants, ministers, storekeepers, professors, athletes, old folks and adolescents.

F is for FRIENDLINESS

Friendliness is another social goal parents may set for their children – and who would not?

There is a wide range in what is considered an acceptable expression of friendliness and sociability – from shy Sally to salesman Sam. But there is general agreement that the most desirable kind of behavior lies somewhere between a neurotic avoidance of people, on the one hand, and an uncommitted "promiscuity" or superficiality, on the other.

One question that must concern every parent is: How may friendliness be promoted and withdrawal or promiscuity avoided?

Atmosphere

From very early in life, infants are sensitive to displays of joy and affection. Not surprisingly, then, children who are generally happy and sociable reflect enjoyable social relations at home. When the tone of interaction in the family is critical and rejecting, or cold and detached, and social interchange is just "no fun," it is small wonder that children become withdrawn and detached.

Behavior

Parental behavior can affect a child's sociability in two ways. One way depends on how the parents behave with the child while he is an infant. To avoid later social problems of either extreme – withdrawal or promiscuity – it seems important that the child experiences a close, intimate, and committed relationship with an adult during the early years.

In addition, parents can serve as friendly and gregarious models for their children's behavior at *all* stages of their growth – whatever their chronological age. They can demonstrate their own sociability in their reactions to the mailman, the checkout clerk, and the woman who announces "Avon calling."

Communication

The content of what a parent says to a child probably does not influence the development of sociability or friendliness – except insofar as it conveys an emotional tone or shows a positive or negative response to the child's behavior toward other people.

Discipline

To support the development of sociability and friendliness, discipline can be either "authoritative" or permissive, but not authoritarian.

For obvious reasons discipline that is harsh, rigid, and untempered by kindness is likely to lead to social withdrawal. To foster friendliness and empathy, discipline should be "other oriented"; that is, it should stress the effect of the child's behavior or misbehavior on *other* people.

Exposure

Certain social qualities are more apt to show up in a child during interactions with strangers, acquaintances, and friends. They are different from the deep attachment and love the child feels for family members. It is essential, therefore, for the child to have many opportunities to meet lots of people outside the family.

G is for GIVING and H is for HELPING

But there is more to social behavior than being friendly, cooperative, and compliant, even when these qualities are balanced with appropriate amounts of independence and assertiveness.

Another highly desirable kind of social behavior is what is known as altruistic or prosocial behavior: giving, sharing, helping another person without expectation of material reward. This is the concerned, caring, compassionate, and self-sacrificing behavior exemplified by the Good Samaritan. It is a quality that many have feared is disappearing from our fast-paced, self-centered society.

Perhaps for this reason behavior of this kind has recently become the target of laboratory experimentation. The experiments investigate children's responses to contrived situations which offer the youngsters the opportunity to behave altruistically (for example, to share a candy bar, to donate to a charity, or to rescue a child in distress whose cries can be heard from the next room).

If it is possible to generalize on the basis of the results of these artificial experiments, the following ways of promoting the development of altruistic behavior may apply at home as well as in the lab.

Atmosphere

Children are more likely to donate to a charity appeal (such as leaving candy or money for an anonymous child who will supposedly be coming later) when they are in a happy mood, and less likely to contribute when they are sad. The "affective" atmosphere in the home is not itself a sufficient cause for altruistic behavior, but apparently it can facilitate its expression.

Behavior

Children are more likely to perform a prosocial act if they first see a model do so. The model can be a teacher, an adult stranger, a peer, or a parent. Children are especially likely to follow the example set by a model who is kind and affectionate, who controls the resources in the situation (like a parent at home or a teacher at school), and who appears to enjoy performing the altruistic act.

Communication

Just saying that "it is good to give" or "you're

supposed to help people in trouble" is not an effective method of motivating children to behave in a helpful, generous way. Parents should set and follow fair standards in their *own behavior* if they expect such qualities to develop in their children.

Discipline

Parents should firmly direct their children's behavior to conform to their—the parents'—standards. They should be careful to make the standards explicit, and use reasoning to justify them, so neither the parents nor the standards appear arbitrary or whimsical.

To establish these standards and rules, adults can emphasize the prosocial "do's"—"Do share your toys... Do give baby sister your teddy bear... Do help daddy with the lawn...."

Rewarding the child's altruistic actions—when they occur—is another way of increasing the frequency of that kind of behavior. Making the child feel guilty about his nonaltruistic behavior, however, is not.

Exposure

Instruction, reinforcement, exhortation, and parental example are effective ways to direct a child toward prosocial behavior. But exposing the child to situations in which he can observe other children help each other and share things may be even more effective.

I is for IDENTITY

Until very recently, it was generally assumed that little girls should grow up to be just like their mommies, and little boys basically like their dads—and never the twain should meet.

Two current social trends have changed all that, however. The Women's Liberation Movement has called for little girls to be more than their mommies—perhaps even like their daddies if they are so inclined. And the increasing number of families where the mother is the only care-giver has lessened the likelihood that all little boys will see enough of their fathers to become just like them.

As a result, our national consciousness about sex roles has been raised. Our conception of appropriate sex roles for our children is in flux and is the subject of much debate.

Whether a parent personally favors traditional masculine and feminine roles—or nontraditional similar and equal roles—for the sexes, the plain fact is that children will increasingly be exposed to both styles of life—through family, friends, and the media.

The most important thing a parent can do may be to help the child reconcile the variation between the traditional and nontraditional sex roles that he or she observes and to support a position that is compatible with the child's inclinations—and with the parents'.

In this area it is impossible to establish what a parent "should" do. Once again, the decision is an individual one—depending on the inclination of individual parents and children.

It is clear, however, that each family must make some decision about what kinds of sex roles are desirable, and that this decision will affect the children's developing notions of what is appropriate behavior for them.

In summary, three points should be remembered by every parent:

- Setting social goals for a child is largely up to the parents—who must set realistic standards that parent and child can meet.
- The standards must be followed consistently. Parents must practice what they preach.
- It is important to remember that child development doesn't just happen. It is guided by the affective Atmosphere in the home; the parents' Behavior; verbal Communication with the child; Disciplinary methods; and the child's Exposure to other people, situations, and things. That's why it's as "easy" as A, B, C...!

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. How much exhibition of aggressive behavior do you think is "healthy" for young school-aged children? How and when should it occur? How can or should it be controlled?
2. How do young school-aged children express their independence from adults, particularly their parents?
3. What do you consider to be "well-balanced" and desirable patterns of social behavior for six-year-olds, seven-year-olds, nine-year-olds, adults?
4. What do you consider to be a good balance between cooperation and competitiveness for children? How well does this prepare children for adult life?
5. What are the various "effects" of different kinds of parental discipline on children's social behavior and development? How can children be disciplined effectively and fairly?
6. Do you agree that your own social behavior provides a model for a young child to follow? What evidence of such "modeling" have you observed? How can a parent set a more effective example?

Additional Readings

Baumrind, Diana. "Some Thoughts About Childrearing." In *Influences on Human Development*, edited by U. Bronfenbrenner and M. Mahoney. Hinsdale, Ill.: Dryden Press, 1975.
A most readable account of the effects of various disciplinary styles on children's social behavior.

Bettelheim, Bruno. *Dialogues with Mothers*. New York: Avon, 1962, 1971.
A report of group meetings with mothers shortly after the war, which still has relevance today.

Braga, Joseph, and Braga, Laurie. *Growing with Children*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974.
A balanced attempt to translate research findings into information and guidelines for parents.

Bryan, James. "Children's Cooperation and Helping Behavior." In *Review of Child Development Research*, Vol. 5, edited by E. M. Hetherington. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975.
A scholarly and comprehensive review of all the psychological research relating to children's cooperative and helping behavior.

Caldwell, Bettye. "Aggression and Hostility in Young Children." *Young Children* 32 (1977): 4-130.
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Clarke-Stewart, K. Alison. *Child Care in the Family*. New York: Academic Press, 1977.
A simplified overview of research findings describing the family's influence on child development from birth to nine years.

Dodson, Fitzhugh. *How to Parent*. New York: Signet, 1970.
One of the many popular books available that offer parents advice on rearing and teaching their children.

Elkind, David. *A Sympathetic Understanding of the Child: Birth to Sixteen*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1974.
A survey of the facts about children's intellectual, emotional, and social development during the school years, written in nontechnical language and in a nontechnical format.

Hartup, Willard, ed. *The Young Child: Reviews of Research*. Vol. 2. Washington: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1972.
"Mini reviews" on a variety of topics in the area of child development.

Parke, Ross. "Some Effects of Punishment on Children's Behavior." In *Influences on Human Development*, edited by U. Bronfenbrenner and M. Mahoney. Hinsdale, Ill.: Dryden Press, 1975.
A brief but thorough review of research of the effects of punishment on children's behavior.

Spock, Benjamin. *Baby and Child Care*. 3rd ed. New York: Pocket Books, 1976.
The all-time classic child-care book, which unfortunately devotes exceedingly little space to the problems, concerns, and development of school-aged children.

Stein, Aletha, and Friedrich, Lynette. "Impact of Television on Children and Youth." In *Review of Child Development Research*, Vol. 5, edited by E. M. Hetherington. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975.
An exhaustive academic review of research on the effects of children's viewing particular kinds of television programs.

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